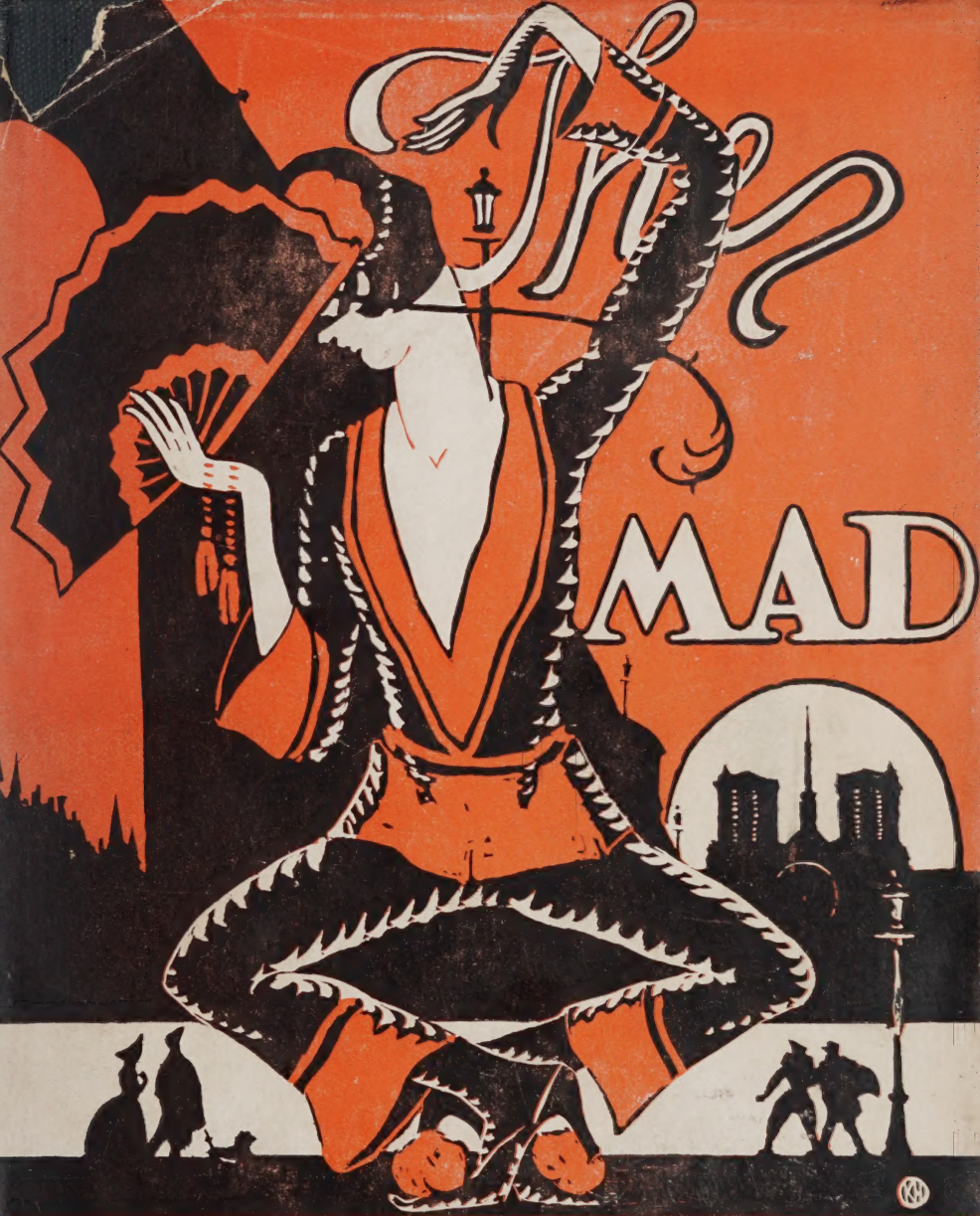




MAD

MASQUERADE
KENYON GAMBIER

THE MAD MASQUERADE

By Kenyon Gambier

IT was Stanton Drew's first visit to Paris. The 'clutch of circumstance' drew him into what was at first no more than an odd experience — a brief, good-natured consent to the subterfuge that might allay a woman's anguish. Lady Llanthony has met with a serious motor accident. In her delirium she calls for her son, long missing. The young American takes on the part of the absent one. The sound of his voice, so like her son's, brings the blinded woman back to life once more and Stanton Drew finds himself involved in a deeper, more complicated adventure than he had bargained for. Before he knows it he is Lord Pontlottyn not only to Lady Llanthony, but to a steadily widening circle. Upon this scene appears Lord Llanthony himself, the able, dominating, self-made British peer, whose imagination seizes upon the strange situation and moulds it to his own forceful purposes.

The
MAD
MASQUERADE



C. P. Leach to R. R. L.

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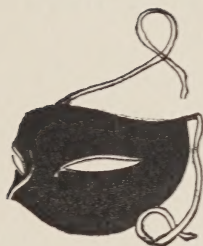
The Mad Masquerade



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The Mad Masquerade

BY
KENYON GAMBIER



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CHAPTER I

IN a little hotel in a narrow and winding street near the Place de l'Opéra in Paris a bridal couple were munching crisp rolls and sipping coffee. They felt it wrong, half-dressed, to be eating this apology for a breakfast in this untidy bedroom, but it was the custom of the country and they wished to be cosmopolitan. They were weary, for the day before they had done the Louvre, the Invalides, the Tomb of Napoleon, the Eiffel Tower, and the Carvalet. From time to time the bride laboriously read aloud items from *Le Journal*, lifting provocative eyes for commendation. She had lips naturally like decanted port wine held against the sun and lots of dark brown hair that brushed quickly to a brilliant sheen. These, and long lashes, were her assets. For the rest, she was pretty and young. Her husband, dark, with burning Celtic eyes, sometimes glanced over her shoulder and, under pretence of reading what he could not read, softly tickled her neck. It felt like his cheek, he told her, for her head was bobbed and her neck was shaved, but the caresses thrilled him as pleasantly as

though he was twirling tendrils. With a sudden sharp interest he pointed to a name and asked what the paragraph was about.

‘Why? Who’s Lady Llanthony? Do you know her?’ This daughter of an English Baptist minister was intensely curious about lords and ladies. She spelled out the paragraph: ‘Another taxi accident — another serious injury — taken to Salpêtrière. Ellis, I’ll never get in a taxi again while I’m in this city. Don’t ask me. Who is she? Where did you hear about her?’

‘Lord Llanthony is my uncle,’ her husband admitted with hesitation. ‘I — I — can’t help it, Jennifer.’

The bride strained back so far to look at him that she snapped her left shoulder strap.

‘Ellis Evans! An uncle, a lord — and you never told me.’ She was hurt at reticence so surprising and justly could not believe her husband when he explained that he had forgotten all about it. Father and uncle had not spoken in his lifetime, he said. After their bitter quarrel the one had leaped from one brilliant success to another while the other had stayed poor with the solace of a clear conscience. His uncle had been bought off opposition to Lloyd George by the grant of a barony and been promoted to Viscount by financing a party paper — a hundred thousand pounds was said to be the price. His uncle wanted that promotion so that his son could be a lord

too — and such a son, a rotter, a degenerate, notorious in print more than once, banished to the States two or three years ago and quiet since; not relations to be proud of, this unscrupulous Lord Llanthony and his fat-witted son, Lord Pontlottyn — oh, no.

The bride pouted — a mannerism due to praise in childhood of her brilliant lips — planted her elbows on the dressing-table, put her chin on her hands, and let silent tears roll down her cheeks. Her husband would not know for several years that these tears were no more than comfortable relief for overstrained nerves and he could not guess that cramming a Paris guide-book into five days would make any bride weep; so he was deeply anxious and profoundly puzzled. He knelt and clasped her, but she drew back.

‘Two lords — and I never told,’ she reproached him, sobbing.

‘If I had had an uncle hanged, and a cousin in prison, you might blame me ——’

‘That,’ she broke in, ‘might have been honourable. To conceal misfortunes — I might forgive that; but two lords — and we agreed — oh, Ellis, we said it a hundred times — to have no secrets from each other. And my friends never knew, nor father, nor mother ——’

‘Your father,’ he reminded her, ‘despises worldly honours. In his last sermon ——’

‘That’s why he ought to have been told.’ Jennifer jumped up and dabbed water on her face.

'But you said,' the perplexed man retorted, 'that it was not a misfortune.'

'He would have forgiven it; it is not as though you were a peer of the realm.'

'I might be,' he answered gloomily. 'If my cousin dies unmarried, I shall be.'

She turned from the washbasin. 'Ellis,' she cried, and flung herself into his arms. She rested there panting. She opened her eyes, lifting her lids slowly and looked up. 'Ellis,' she whispered and drew his lips to hers.

'Go downstairs, Ellis,' she ordered prettily, slipping away from his eager arms, 'and wait for me. I won't be a minute. We'll call at the hospital ——'

'Call?' he repeated blankly. 'I've never seen her. She's never heard of me, most likely.'

Jennifer smiled and shook her head. 'You won't see her now,' she reminded him, 'but you — we — can enquire. And who knows? we might be of use. What if Lord Llanthony or Lord Pontlottyn — what if neither is here; no man to help ——'

'They have ignored us,' he protested.

'Oh, go, Ellis, go.' She pushed him playfully. 'You call yourself a Christian and refuse to help an aunt because she has a title. Oh, no! That's not you.'

'Oh, well.'

She kissed him again and hustled him out. She went to the mirror, lifted her lids slowly and in-

spected her lips as they framed the words 'Lady Pontlottyn.' She quivered ecstatically. She turned away without even looking for signs of tears. Her little fountain emptied itself automatically and left no trace on cheeks which had never known rouge. She put on her dress, then unlocked a bag and drew out a volume — 'The Manners and Tone of Good Society.' Possession of this book was her most important secret from her husband. She wished always to be an authority to him and to appear as though she knew everything. Following directions she wrote 'To enquire' on the engraved card she was so proud of and powdered her face lightly. She had only done this since her wedding day and the touch of the powder puff on her cheek was a caress to her. In the elevator her side-sweeping eyes told her that the boy was admiring her and when she stepped out she knew that the three men in the hall were watching her. Every stitch in her clothes pealed wedding bells and pealed them rather well considering limited opportunities and a thin purse. She advanced towards her husband with a dignity transcending wifedom. She inspected him with a new, vivid interest. A lord one day, perhaps; he must get his clothes made in London hereafter. Her smile was radiant.

'Sharp worksy,' he said. It was the national joke of the moment to russianize words in derision of alleged Bolshevik propaganda. 'It must be a taxisky.' The underground and the busses are not for those

who do not understand French. Mrs. Evans spoke a little, but as yet did not understand a word. In the taxi, she consulted her guide-book. 'This Salpêtrière has been everything in turns,' she commented. 'Who was Manon Lescaut?'

'There's an opera about her.'

'Well, she was imprisoned there whoever she was. It was a kind of bastille for ladies and before that an arsenal, it says. Now it's a home for old people, and mad people, and it has a ward for accidents.'

They were silent after they crossed the Seine, for the shadow of the hospital waxed deeper as they approached. They looked at each other with lifted brows as they passed the great bonded wine warehouse. These conscientious objectors to alcohol in any form were troubled to see this Gargantuan provision for the demands of a thirsty city, and the young husband thought that they might at least have put les halles aux vins in a side street. He wished to retreat when the taxi stopped in front of grim penitentiary walls, so harshly forbidding, stretching so far to right and left as to suggest a walled city; but his wife was inside the gate before he had paid the taxi-man.

'Ma tante, Vicomtesse Llanthony, est ici, malade,' she told keepers of the gate, and they said, 'Oui, Mademoiselle,' and poured out a cascade of directions, fortunately pointing with outstretched arm. Across great courtyards, beneath arches, along a wide avenue

shaded by budding sycamores they walked, acres of green grass spread around them, peopled by old women, some of whom were feeding lusty, dusty sparrows, some hobbling aimlessly, some gazing vacantly. At last they were completely lost, but the wide rue de Cuisine — this walled town boasted a Kitchen road, along which men pushed little food-laden cars on rails — led them to the rue de l'Infirmerie, and they were soon among a crowd of silent people seeking like themselves for news from the wards of the operating-rooms.

'Ma tante, Vicomtesse Llanthony.' The savour of that enquiry was sweet to the lips of the bride and the hearing of her utterance chimed musically in her ears. A young interne passing caught her words and addressed her.

Madame la Vicomtesse was not fully conscious, she was told, and no one could say what the outcome might be. Jennifer got the general sense of the words after patient repetitions, but understood immediately when told that 'son fils milor Pontlottyn had only just now arrived from foreign parts and gone to the chamber of madame his mother. Mademoiselle Desmond was with him, that brave young lady who had also been in the accident, but had escaped uninjured.'

'Leave the card,' the young husband ordered abruptly as the wife translated, and he turned as though to run.

‘Ellis.’ Gentle reproach was in the tone, in the slow, sweeping glance. ‘I must know. How can I go seeing sights when a relative of yours is lying between life and death? Are you ashamed of me, dear? Don’t you want your swell relations to meet me?’ She bent her head. ‘Of course if it’s that ——’ She stepped forward in sorrowful obedience.

‘Darling,’ he murmured, ‘of course we’ll wait; it isn’t that ——’ but he had to coax her. She would go, go willingly, she said, if he thought she was not good enough for these relations about whom he had been so mysterious; she knew her life had been very simple; she had tried her best; they would leave this wicked gay Paris this afternoon.

He wanted to shake her, but was still profoundly under her spell. ‘His reputation is putrid,’ he said. ‘I don’t want you ever to meet him.’

She smiled at this. ‘Can’t you trust me?’ she asked. She was intensely excited and very curious, for she had never spoken to a lord. So the two sat down, waiting, silent, with the rest of the anxious little throng.

Inside, this young man of ‘putrid reputation’ was standing before a closed door waiting for a summons. From time to time the young girl who was by his side lifted her tameless, sensitive face to his and murmured a word of caution or encouragement. She was white with that vivid pallor which anxiety can bring to the cheek of red-haired people and her eyes were

strained, but so complete was her self-control that she stood quiescent, without restlessness or impatience, with mind and slim graceful body braced to withstand a great calamity. Not so her companion; he shifted from foot to foot, fidgeted, wiped the perspiration from his forehead, averted his eyes when in the distance he saw a long white bundle silently wheeled across the hall into the operating-room, and appeared to think of running away in panic.

A doctor stopped, a middle-aged, grey-haired man exuding vitality, kindness, and ability. 'Mademoiselle,' he said in a voice that breathed hope and encouragement. He looked a question as he glanced at the young man.

'Yes,' the girl said, nodding, 'he has come, Tybo has come. Lord Pontlottyn, Professeur Losset, chirurgien de la Salpêtrière.'

'Bien, bien.' The doctor shook the young man's hand with hearty sympathy and spoke at some length.

'He says, Tybo,' the girl translated, 'that your coming will be a great blessing to your mother. He hopes, he is almost sure, she will know you. He says her end will be peaceful now. Dr. Losset has been so kind, he has done everything he could.' She turned to the latter. 'My cousin,' she explained, 'arrived only this morning from the United States. He has eaten of the enraged cow.' The doctor smiled at her

idiomatic expression for 'roughing it' and hurried away.

'Any minute now,' the girl cautioned. 'Remember, Auntie can't see. We think she can hear. Speak low and very clear. Don't break down. Promise; yes, again.' She caught his hand and pressed it as the door silently opened and a nurse beckoned.

They stood listening, gazing across the darkened room at the bed. A continuous sound came with the effect of a little tack-hammer heard from way off. Intent concentration caught the words: 'Tybo, my boy, Tybo . . . my son.'

'She will know you.' The girl whispered this encouragement in a low voice as she tightened the clasp on the young man's hand. 'She will die in peace. Your voice would reach her over the borderland, I think. Nearly twenty-four hours — all the time like this, moaning for you. Kneel down, Tybo, lift her hand to your head.' She led him across and he followed stumbling. She pressed him down by the bedside and it was she who lifted the hand which lay nervously groping on the counterpane and placed it on his head. 'Tybo is here, Auntie,' she said in a clear calm voice. 'He has come.'

'I am here, Mother — Tybo.'

Muttering ceased, the moaning stopped. The hand rested motionless on the head of the kneeling youth. The silence was profound.

The long minutes dragged. Light hands pressed

the young man's shoulders while the nurse slipped a pillow under one knee, then a second under the other. He was sure that a dead hand rested on his head, but he did not move; hardly breathing, his face buried in the counterpane, he awaited a signal.

'Don't move,' came the whisper into his ear. 'We hope, we believe, that she is going to sleep.' The girl caught his hand and held it and the vitality of her touch made him wince, for numb muscles were quickened to pain.

At long last, when cramp had bound him and he was trembling, came the message of release. He slipped backwards and lay on the floor while the nurse massaged his legs.

'Elle dort comme un enfant, elle dort,' she whispered, smiling.

They helped him to his feet and led him to the door.

Sara Desmond's eyes were like stars and her face was radiant. 'You have dragged her back!' she cried. 'Oh, yes, Nurse, there is a little hope now, isn't there? Surely ——'

'There is always hope, mademoiselle,' was the answer. 'You will leave the address below, of course, won't you? We might send at any hour, you see, milor.'

'Yes, yes,' Sara Desmond agreed, 'they have my address. Tybo, you must come to my hotel. Any time, Nurse. If she wakes and calls for him — yes, day or night.'

The young man, dazed, deeply moved, limped along, leaning heavily on the girl's arm. She patted his hand. 'I wonder if Nurse meant it,' she whispered. 'I wonder if there is a chance. To see that hand at rest, to see peace come to her the instant she heard your voice; we were afraid to let you move. We feared she would wake up. An hour — all of an hour. You were wonderful.' Her voice was a little shaky; 'When will you come, Tybo?' she pleaded. 'Now, right away? Let's lunch at my hotel now and then you'll bring your things, won't you? I can't bear to be one minute out of reach, nor that you should be either.'

'Of course.' He was still limping and looking vaguely about when they stepped out of this long, low, new building, equipped to this morning's inventions in its laboratories and operating-rooms. They stood in a little lane, behind them this last word in modern construction, in front of them a quaint little building of the time of Henri Fourth, typical violent contrast of ever-changing Paris, old, yet eternally young.

Sara heard a man's surly voice: 'It can't be, I tell you he is American.'

'I'm going to be sure anyway. Lord Pontlottyn, are you Lord Pontlottyn?' Met by a blank stare, Mrs. Ellis Evans stepped back with an embarrassed apology; but she was after them ere they had covered twenty yards.

‘You are Lord Pontlottyn!’ she cried. ‘They told me so. I’m Mrs. Ellis Evans. This is my husband, your cousin. If you don’t want to know us’ — she was red with indignation — ‘you can say so. Anyhow, you can tell us how our aunt is.’

It was Sara who answered: ‘Oh, please forgive him,’ she said with a fine appealing courtesy. ‘Tybo, wouldn’t you like to sit down over there? I’ll tell our cousins all about Auntie.’ They had come to the long avenue of trees, bordered by seats; he sat heavily and buried his face in his hands.

‘He doesn’t even know what you said,’ Sara apologized. ‘He has just arrived from New York and seen his mother for the first time; we were all to have met in Paris, and he finds — oh, an awful shock to him. I’m a kind of cousin of yours, too. I’m Sara Desmond and Lady Llanthony is my father’s sister.’

‘I’m pleased to meet you,’ said the bride. ‘We saw the notice in the paper and we just had to enquire. Ellis was so anxious, and so was I.’ Her eyes filled with tears.

‘She is hardly conscious,’ Sara explained, ‘but we hope, we believe that she recognized Tybo. She quieted suddenly. She slept. We have the right to hope — a faint hope. It is kind of you to come and ask about her.’ She looked at Tybo, still sitting with bent head, his chin on his hands. ‘I must take care of him,’ she murmured; ‘I know you will understand

and excuse us.' She tried to withdraw her hand still firmly held by this insistent relative.

'We are so sorry,' Jennifer said as the two tears rolled down her cheeks. 'My husband and Lord Pontlottyn are first cousins. This is our wedding tour and we are going home to-morrow evening.'

Sara smiled, wished them happiness, and tried again to draw her hand away. 'They should not part like this,' the bride pleaded; 'they have never met; I don't suppose you ever heard of us. Should they go on with this fathers' quarrel — and her ladyship dying, too, perhaps. Oh, couldn't you manage it; wouldn't you come to lunch with us?'

'Perhaps to-morrow,' Sara said, shaking her head and glancing at Lord Pontlottyn.

Her brows lifted as Mrs. Evans promptly went over and put a hand on his shoulder. 'Why couldn't we all make up the quarrel?' she pleaded. 'Do you know why we should go on being strangers? Ellis doesn't. We can't be of much use, I suppose, but we should like to be.'

Lord Pontlottyn stood up, glancing at Sara who had followed, obviously to protect him. 'A bride,' Jennifer murmured, lifting her eyes slowly to his, 'always has her own way.'

'He must rest,' Sara said.

But this refusal was ignored. It was apparent that only Tybo's decision would be accepted.

'I'll come,' Sara cried. 'Tybo, you must have a rest.'

Troubled, she reflected an instant, 'If she wakes . . . if we're wanted?' she thought aloud, 'you . . .'

'We can't be out of touch,' Tybo broke in, shaking his head and coming to life. 'We'll go to your hotel, Sara, and you shall all lunch with me.'

Sara shot a glance of relief and gratitude, Jennifer gasped with delight, and Ellis Evans scowled at the wife who had thrust herself so crudely on these unwilling family connections. They strolled on to the great gate in couples, the two girls behind, the bride blissfully silent, elated in foreseeing the effect of her narration at home; 'entertained by my cousin Lord Pontlottyn.' She felt that she had triumphed. Was not her husband related on the father's side, hence a nearer connection than this unknown Miss Desmond? Who was Miss Desmond to come between a lord and his possible successor? Alert for a hint of jealousy or patronage, she perceived none and began to talk. She proudly told how she had refused Ellis three times before his persistence had won her; how she had once punished him by borrowing a prayer book, marching past him and her father's Wesleyan chapel and actually worshipping in the church near by; how she had been punished for this crime; and again for an enormity equally atrocious, learning to dance in secret; how jealous Ellis was and inclined to be narrow; but as for her, she was broad-minded. Sara listened with an absent smile.

The young man with the scowl told his sympathy

with Lord Pontlottyn in halting phrases that carried a genuine message, but chagrin and humiliation at his wife's tactics brought also blunt explanations. It was not by his wish, he said, that he had met his cousin and he wanted that understood.

'Don't get high hat,' said this English lord in a friendly way. 'Your wife's got it right, why not friends?'

Ellis Evans, contemptuous of this notorious relative, suspicious of cordiality, annoyed at the American dress and language, solemnly denounced the hereditary principle in the House of Lords.

'Me too,' promptly agreed this potential legislator by descent. 'I've been an awful lot in the States, you know, and the Senate idea is the cheese. Elective, you know, Evans; what sense in my being a member of House of Lords? My gosh, no.'

The deeply serious Evans, affronted by the trans-Atlantic language of this denationalized lordling, stiffly objected to taking any political lessons from across the water and proceeded to argue against primogeniture. Instant concurrence brought further annoyance.

'Why should all the works be mine because I'm the eldest son?' his lordship asked amiably.

They stood beneath the line of the Orleans railway waiting for a taxi. Evans thought of another subject which might bring argument. He could not sail under false colors, he said. He objected to any union be-

tween Church and State. He was a Methodist as his uncle once had been before success and society had drawn him from the true faith. He was a strong advocate of disestablishment.

‘Mit me, boy,’ said his lordship heartily. ‘I’m with you.’

‘You’re just being polite,’ was the angry retort. ‘That’s the way with all Tories. You never will argue.’

‘Tory? Me?’ Lord Pontlottyn smiled. ‘Listen, son.’ But what this saturnine ‘son’ was to listen to cannot be known, as a taxi passed and was hailed.

In this dreary corner of Paris, Sara and Lord Pontlottyn glanced out as they drove past a long line of little restaurants, fixed their eyes on one and then looked at each other. They could feel the hardly hidden hostility of this bridegroom and it was easy for Sara to perceive a vague antagonism against herself on the part of this pushing bride. Nothing, however, could shake their friendly good will. Sara was gravely, pleasantly courteous; his lordship was blandly unruffled.

‘I guess you’re right, Sara,’ he said. ‘If you say so, it goes. I ought to be in touch. You fix up the reservation for me as soon as we get there.’

She nodded. Such odd appealing gratitude was expressed in her glance that Ellis Evans was puzzled. Could it be that, at a time like this, this irresponsible youth was not to be trusted? Quite possible; com-

plete disappearance on a mad debauch would fit in with Lord Pontlottyn's notorious record of folly.

'I wish we could have been nearer,' Sara said; 'but I searched for hotels yesterday.'

They drove along the banks of the Seine to one of the world-known hotels on the rue Rivoli. Inside the pair went to the 'bureau.'

'You're quite sure,' murmured Sara.

'You say so; that settles it. But how about cutting out the lord; no reporters, and all that.'

She nodded, engaged the room and signed his name as Tybo Ellis. 'Now,' she commanded, 'go and rest. You have been under an awful strain.' She put her hand on his lapel and looked anxiously into his face. 'I'll take on the cousins.' She flickered a smile.

'Not on your life. It's you to hit the pillow. Leave these pushers to me.'

She nodded gratitude. 'You make it easy for me,' she said with revived spirit. 'I've vaguely heard Uncle had a brother.'

'More than I've heard,' he answered with a grin. 'If Cousin Ellis's father is like him, I don't wonder there was a row. He wants a fight, right now.'

'I'll tackle him,' said valiant Sara. 'You talk to the bride.'

'I'll gurgle her a full line all right. You take the lemon.'

She found the Lemon worse than sour. He was

bitter. She could not know that he had grown up yellow with jealousy of the successful branch of the family and profoundly contemptuous of the notorious escapades of his cousin. He had pictured an overfed and vacuous youth and could not adjust himself to this alert and muscular young man whose tanned face and springy step proclaimed clean living in the open air. He could find nothing to despise, no chance for a quarrel, no topic for argument, no hint of superiority. He brooded, frowning, suddenly realizing that he had high and just grounds for criticism. This son of an American mother was not upholding the fine British traditions of his class. His manner lacked dignity, his phrases were American, his accent trans-Atlantic, he even looked American, and as for his clothes —

Ellis Evans laid down his fork and said abruptly in a low voice: 'He's very American, Miss Desmond.'

Sara nodded, smiling. 'Could he help it?' she asked. 'Auntie brought him over to us in New York nearly every year when he was little.'

'Ought she?' he asked brusquely, the furrow already fixed in his brow becoming deeper. 'Was it fair to make a foreigner out of a British lord?'

Surprised at his warmth, she flung back her ruddy head and made cool inspection of his hostile face. Yes, he wanted a fight all right. 'Should we criticize her now?' she asked. He looked down, rebuked.

'There is a lot to be said for Tybo,' she continued in a lowered voice, glancing across the table. 'He's what he is because the war caught him on the other side. Auntie was over here and she would not let him come home through submarines to her. So he got a lot of his education over there without father or mother near. He arrived for the Armistice, for the big row, the orgy, the madness . . . not twenty, you understand, and without having had the discipline of the war. Well ——'

'Ellis,' the bride broke in. 'It's a perfect scream, isn't it, that you should know more about the family than Tybo. He is not sure that you are the heir. That is — of course — if he's not married,' she looked slantwise, smiling, into Lord Pontlottyn's face, 'and he won't say if he is, or is not.'

'Tybo married!' Sara laughed at an idea so absurd. 'Don't tease her, Tybo.'

'Then, then, until he is ——' Jennifer looked across at her husband with naïve wonder and delight.

'But is it true?' Sara asked, surprised, 'how can that be, Mr. Evans?'

Evans, looking from cousin to cousin, demanded sourly, 'Haven't either of you ever heard of me?'

'Sorry,' Tybo replied, shaking his head.

'I knew vaguely of relatives,' Sara explained courteously. 'I gathered the trouble was on your side. I remember Auntie saying your father rejected an advance.'

‘Made after years,’ Evans said, bitter as quassia. ‘After Lord Llanthony bought his first title.’

Tybo flung back his head and grinned. ‘Bought!’ he echoed.

‘Just so. Bought!’ Ellis craned his neck and curled his lip. ‘Your father wrote, “Extending the hand of friendship,” he called it. He didn’t want the title to die, he said, and had got a special clause in the patent. If his line failed, my father’s family was to come in. The first, the only advance; not because he cared for us, but so the title shouldn’t die. We might, but the title mustn’t. “Provision would be made to support the title.” Support the title, you see; not my father, nor my brothers and sisters.’ His voice trembled with an indignation so profound that even the young lord was sobered for an instant.

‘Was your family dying?’ he demanded. ‘Did your father or the rest of you need support?’

‘We take care of ourselves,’ was the hot answer.

‘Of course. Then why bring it in? Your father was asked to help in making a family name. Why the kick? Your father might not believe in lords, still, they’re part of the system, aren’t they? And not many people think it an insult — that’s what your father seems to have thought it — to offer a possible peerage and riches to a son.’

‘Seems? Hear his answer,’ Evans said, in a solemn voice. ‘He wrote across the letter: “The tabernacles of robbers prosper for a time, but the light shall one

day be dark in thy tabernacle and thy candle shall be put out with thee!’”

The smouldering antagonism of a lifetime flamed in eyes and voice as he quoted this bitter retort.

‘Ellis! He never did?’ The bride was near to tears. She looked in shocked apology at these family connections whom her little stubborn will had forced to entertain her; then in appeal to her irreconcilable husband. She knew that his attitude was due in part to her conduct. She met a hard stare, straightened, protruded a lip, put a plump hand on his lordship’s, and glanced up at him sidewise. ‘I don’t care,’ she exclaimed. ‘It’s nice to find relatives and I hope you will be friends with me, Tybo.’

‘Sure I will,’ he said. ‘What’s your first name?’ He squeezed her hand.

‘It’s Welsh for Guinevere, I suppose — Jennifer.’

‘Well, Jennifer,’ he said blandly, ‘why does Cousin Ellis dig up the family skeleton? Why does he want to quarrel? Why doesn’t he look on us as real folks and act according? Why not an innocent and peaceful hour with us?’ He leaned across the table. ‘Horse-collar!’ he cried, laughing. ‘Why should the tabernacle be dark and the candle snuffed out? What’s got you, Cousin Ellis?’

The irreconcilable pushed back his chair.

‘Remember Auntie, Mr. Evans.’ Sara’s voice, cool and commanding, arrested his movement. With immense self-control, she quickly reminded him that

this accidental meeting need not be repeated unless by his wish, and pointed out that her cousin and herself had shown every wish to be friendly. Their advances had been rejected; all right; they agreed to that. Now that he had made himself so clearly understood, lunch could be accepted and finished in the kindly spirit in which Lord Pontlottyn had offered the hospitality.

‘I am sorry,’ Ellis Evans muttered. ‘I’ve been thinking these things for a lifetime. They came out.’

‘Now they’re off your chest,’ his lordship said, without a trace of ill-feeling, ‘you’ll feel better.’

Things went better than could have been hoped, for within five minutes Jennifer was rattling away as though nothing had happened. She was intoxicated by the new association, the new surroundings, and reckless about the coming settlement with her husband. She watched Sara with adoring envy and saw herself as helping this wonderful girl in cementing peace between two branches of an important family. She heard Sara address the newfound cousin as ‘Ponty.’ When she and her husband were leaving, she murmured, ‘Good-bye, Ponty; I’ll soon bring Ellis around. I hate family rows.’

‘Good-bye,’ he answered, chuckling. ‘It’s aces easy you’ll not succeed, but keep on with the good work.’

‘The heir,’ she said, flinging back her head and glancing proudly across at her husband, ‘and the

heir presumptive — he is that, of course, now, at any rate — must be friends. You'll help, won't you?'

'I'll stand for a lot,' he answered, grinning genially. 'I'll go the limit.'

When these guests had departed, the cousins stood for an instant staring into each other's eyes.

'You're all in,' he said, and indeed this luncheon was the last straw: she drooped visibly. 'I'm on guard,' he added gently, 'on guard all the time, right here. Sleep till to-morrow morning. I'm off to the hospital and then to get my trunk, then straight back here. If any message comes, I'll let you know. Laze till noon to-morrow. Toddle off — see?'

He turned and ran away.

CHAPTER II

JENNIFER's husband sulked, then he smouldered, then he flamed. Her tears drenched the fire. He detailed facts as he saw them — a long history of the misdeeds, of the backslidings of this degenerate branch of the family. The uncle was a commercial and maritime pirate whose reckless gambles had been the crimes of a strong man without a conscience. The cousin was a spoiled boy whose sins had been the contemptible doings of a frivolous weakling without brains. Oh, yes, pleasant-mannered enough, no doubt, but no principles, no standards; he had laughed at everything that morning, hadn't he? Laughed while his mother lay dying. What had he done? Everything that a fool could do. At Armistice time, it took a lot to get yourself arrested; this fool boy had managed to do that. He had tried to drive an auto into the fountain at Trafalgar Square and had driven into Bow Street instead. Oh, Jennifer might giggle, but he had an abandoned woman with him; notorious, shameless; and the whole thing in print, pages of it. Then a breach-of-promise case, disgraceful; his mushy letters read in court and all England laughing at the silly ass. Then he had run away with a woman and the two had been held up by the immigration officers at New York. That notoriety had brought printed

hints that he had done a bolt from creditors; rumours of unsettled gambling and racing debts, debts of honour so-called; not that they really were, for debts of honour were what you'd really had something for, debts to the butcher and the baker. Ellis wished to be fair, he said, and he couldn't say that the scoundrel had forged his father's name, but that tale had been whispered.

All this explained the long residence in the United States; a disgraced fugitive, no doubt with a small allowance from his father on condition that he did not return to England. Looked well, did he? Of course; nearly starving and without brains, he probably had worked with his hands. Lots of rotters did that and got set up and then people believed they had turned over a new leaf and let 'em come back for further mischief.

'And you hold his hand at lunch and smile up at him,' the husband said; 'and expect me to be friends with this piffling Yankee rotter, who has disgraced the name of Evans.'

'He has reformed, Ellis,' the bride pleaded. 'You can see that. And it's your duty and mine to help him.'

'You?' was the contemptuous retort. 'The wife of a poor relation, of a small-town draper; what can you do? His father and mine inherited a ship-broker's business. His father forced mine out, made a fortune and got a title. My father sells baby-clothes

and combinations over the counter and is only a town councillor. But we've got our self-respect and your husband has never been held up to public scorn. There's no woman in my past to come and darken any day for you.'

Jennifer nodded slowly and looked up slantwise at her husband and smiled. Presently she was in his arms and family peace was restored. As her head nestled against his breast, she thought that one day he might be Lord Pontlottyn. She pressed closer.

'Come,' she said, 'we must cut out the Bastille and the Panthéon and the Cluny Museum and do some shopping—with an eye to business, Ellis, an eye to business. You must carry back some new ideas.'

Her willing slave in the newly restored amity, he let himself be taken to one of the great cheap stores down by the river-bank. Jumbled heaps were lying on long rows of counters outside on the sidewalks and Jennifer tossed them over as she saw others doing. She showed him this bit of lace, then that, translating the price in francs into English money. 'There's a profit even if you buy at retail,' she cried, but he only laughed. She bought some odds and ends for almost nothing, and then suddenly drew him away, triumph shining in her eyes.

'Ellis,' she said, tapping her parcel, 'these things would make a fine line for the emporium.'

'What do you know about business?' he asked.

'I know what our girls buy,' she answered, smiling up at him.

'We are not importers,' he explained, 'and, besides, you can't get at the manufacturers and wholesalers here.'

She undoubled her clenched hand and showed him a small tag. It contained a name and address. 'Garnitures de dentelle — en gros.'

'It was on the counter,' said Jennifer. 'I saw it and picked it up. Here's your man, Ellis; wholesale dealer in lace trimmings. Come.'

She coaxed, she argued; the firm, he answered, had its London connections and he was not one for new ways nor for dealings in foreign money with foreign people. The address was off the Boulevard Saint-Michel, she told him, and that meant the Latin Quarter, so they could see that at the same time. Everybody should see that wild region. Reluctantly, he assented. They drove through the wide and respectable boulevard, looking in vain for eccentric students and mysterious haunts of license and revelry. They did not know that the Latin Quarter, which Rabelais thus named because students from all the world actually spoke in Latin, has become the most respectable in Paris, and they were profoundly disappointed. The taxi turned into a narrow street and dropped them outside what seemed a prison wall. They entered a grimy archway, peered about an unsavoury courtyard, and finally discovered a small

sign. 'He doesn't want to be found,' Jennifer said, laughing. 'But we have foiled him.' Her husband was reluctant to enter, fearing some deadly trap, but chivalry compelled him to follow his more enterprising bride.

In a dark and crowded office they found a dignified old gentleman, bending over a desk, writing. His grey-haired wife, bending over a desk, was writing. A younger woman, subsequently found to be a daughter-in-law, was bending over a desk, writing. So intent were they on keeping existing accounts up to date that the possibility of a new one was evidently resented, but resented with a grave courtesy. When Jennifer's halting words were heard, the elderly couple nodded to the daughter-in-law and went on writing with beaver-like industry and national capacity for detail. Young Madame Fourgeon, it appeared, had some English. The rest was easy. A small 'trial order'; they would buy another trunk, Ellis said to his bride, and they could so pack it perhaps as to evade the duty, if duty there should prove to be. Payment required a visit to a bank, and it was too late in the day for that.

Ellis Evans went away astonished at the profits of the London middleman. He had got a 'wonderful line' at an amazing price through this 'direct touch with the foreign producer.' He was elated. Pocket and pride were equally concerned; he was now an importer. In the taxi, Jennifer did not remind him

that she had taken the initiative. She praised him. They had a bad dinner that night in the gloomy dining-room of their small hotel. The husband on principle objected to going to restaurants, for they charged him extra because he did not order any wine; it was the lax morality in things like this that made him think so lightly of the French. Jennifer had enjoyed these meals before, but now she thought of that luncheon with her cousins and of an ordered elegance such as she had never dreamed of; but neither spoke of these newly discovered relations. Afterwards, they strolled along the boulevards, but they never sat and sipped in the open air. They did not know how to order a temperance drink, and Ellis doubted if such a thing could be had. He railed against this idle, pleasure-loving people.

‘You’ve seen them at work to-day,’ Jennifer reminded him. ‘And now you’re an importer and on to a tasty line that’s a money-maker. It’s the beginning, Ellis. I saw a counter marked “Occasion exceptionnelle.” I looked it up. That means special job lots. You could have bought the lot retail and made a ripping turnover — imitation seal and the stuff they call poplieski. The girls would jump at the collarettes.’

‘A Soviet name,’ snorted Ellis.

‘You can call it royal fur,’ she said.

They went to bed at ten o’clock.

In the morning, she had a headache; he must complete the business alone, she said. She wrote the

address of the bank and of the manufacturer of lace for him. 'Show that to the taxi-driver,' she said, 'and they speak English at both places.' Reluctant to leave her alone in Paris, he demurred, but he did not admit that fear which at first often paralyzes an untravelled man in a strange capital of which he has not the language. He would drop in, he said, on the way from the bank to the manufacturer, just to see that she was all right. She moaned and turned her face to the wall.

As soon as he had gone, she bounded up, dragged her etiquette book from its secret receptacle and followed its directions in marking p.p.c. cards. She saw that she had remembered accurately; the correct thing was to leave these in person. She was determined to be absolutely right in these matters with her resplendent relations. She did not dare to dress lest she be forced to accompany her husband, but she got as far as she could and crawled back to bed. When he came after what seemed to her hours, she forced a wan smile as she opened heavy eyes and motioned him away. Then with nimble agility she jumped into her clothes, nodded to herself in the glass, and bolted away with a smile. She hoped to see Lord Pontlottyn again. Her husband's attacks on him had invested him with a shadowy mantle of danger and romance.

An hour previous, his lordship had sent a note to the room of Sara Desmond. 'I have been to the hos-

pital. She had a restful night, is better, and knew me. I stayed until she went to sleep.' The answer to this was: 'I am coming down right away. I'm quite rested.'

He sat in the foyer waiting. The assistant manager with great courtesy placed an official blank in his hands. 'A detail formal,' he was told. 'The police have demanded with every visitor to Paris these informations.'

'Bien,' said the young man, who had picked up this useful word. 'I'll fill 'em out after.'

The assistant manager bowed and retreated while Lord Pontlottyn studied the document with a clouded brow. It was easy to guess that name and details of birth were required and for some reason his lordship found these requirements extremely annoying. He muttered an expression of impatience and thought with a high contempt of a nation that was determined, so many years after the war had ended, to know all about him. He leaned back in his chair, flung open his coat, and stuck his thumbs in the armholes of his vest. This at college had become his favourite attitude of reflection.

'Don't take it to heart like that,' said a cheery voice. A sandy-haired stranger with a freckled face and an engaging grin seated himself and calmly thrust his thumbs into his armholes. His attitude was a burlesque of that of his lordship and was evidently meant to be such. Lord Pontlottyn drew himself up

to repel the advances of this insidious confidence man, but the frown faded quickly.

‘Shake,’ he cried, and the other laughed as they shook hands.

The password to this sudden amity was pinned on the breast of each; they wore the same fraternity pin. Mr. Sam Tibbetts, native son of the Golden West, proclaimed himself Californian with the high pride of the transmontane people, and listened with condescension to the admission that his newfound friend hailed from Long Island.

‘My mother comes from there,’ Lord Pontlottyn said, ‘but I — I — am a British subject.’

Mr. Tibbetts successfully hid surprise and regret at this confession, and with well-meant but doubtful tact complimented the young man on his complete success in hiding any signs of his origin.

‘I was at Kenyon College in Ohio,’ his lordship explained, ‘and they’re pretty good Americans there and I suppose I got tagged.’

‘Tagged,’ laughed Tibbetts — ‘saturated.’

‘Don’t blame me,’ pleaded the Americanized Briton; ‘it’s a college tucked in among the most beautiful trees in the world and the place gets you.’

‘Fine! I’ve heard of it.’

‘Staying in this hotel?’

Tibbetts grinned. ‘I couldn’t afford a top-floor single in this haunt of millionaires,’ he admitted; ‘but you gotta know these places, haven’t you? I’ve got a

great scheme. I walk into a big hotel every day — a different one every time — and I give the password. I just say “perruquier,” and that gives me the run of the show. They lead me to the barber’s shop and I fight off the shampoo and all the rest, sometimes with my fists, and I get a shave. Then I mosey round with my optics open and then they can never say at home that I don’t know that hotel, can they? I . . .’ — He paused. His eyes followed Sara Desmond, who had stepped out of the elevator. ‘That girl must be from California,’ he exclaimed with glowing enthusiasm. ‘They don’t make ’em like that anywhere else. Do you know who she is?’ As he got no answer, he assumed a negative. ‘Look how the sun hits that hair,’ he said. ‘I couldn’t do it’ — he sighed — ‘but I’d like to try. I’m supposed to be a painter, you know, but I’m taking a month before I settle down.’ His eyes were continuously on Sara as he ran on. ‘I say, I’ve got a fine line of restaurants with an eighteen-franc dinner and I’m on to the “supplément.” “Plus fours,” I call these eating-places, because after everything but the sardines and cheese they put plus four in small writing, and no minuses, I can tell you, and when you get your bill, your eighteen francs is a mouse tailing a procession of elephants. I say, let’s have dinner to-morrow night and afterwards — well, there’s a wonderful ball — a bal Gavarni . . . I say, that girl knows how to dress; chic, that’s the word, chic. But I’ve got a date now.’

He rose, still watching Sara, whose eyes met his and passed through him, unregarding. 'She is of the world, that girl,' he confided to his lordship; 'she has the trick of the eye. She sees, yet she doesn't see. She disdains, you know it, but she doesn't show it. How do they get it over? I stare and stare, and I study those glances that seem to say nothing and yet say everything, and I can never get them on the canvas. I don't think women can learn that glance. Born with it, I think. How about to-morrow? What, not free for a week? Well, if you really want to come — oh, all right, next week Thursday. I'll come here. Is that all right? Good-bye, Evans, mighty glad we've met.'

Mr. Tibbetts cast one last lingering look at Sara, then bustled away. 'A bientôt,' he called out, proud of his exit phrase.

Lord Pontlottyn went over to Sara, who was pretending to write the letter which she tore up as he approached. She did not speak; her eyes were charged with an appeal; they drooped as they met his look. Any friend who might have witnessed this meeting with a cousin must have said that she was embarrassed and humble, two qualities never associated with Sara Desmond. Her attitude as he sat down by her side was suppliant and her head was bowed as though asking forgiveness.

'She was better,' he said. 'It was all just like yesterday. Her hand rested more firmly on my head. I

could feel that all the time. And she could move it more.'

Holding her breath, Sara had listened. 'Moved it?' she asked, almost in a whisper; 'over your head, all over it?'

There was a touch of fear in her utterance. She made intent, eager scrutiny, inch by inch, of his head, and he turned his neck slowly, thus giving her help in this minute examination.

'I can't remember, oh, I can't remember,' she murmured, sinking back into her chair and closing her eyes in a vain effort to recall what eluded her.

'Why try?' he asked. 'I tell you, it's all right. Her fingers couldn't move a lot, of course, they couldn't go far, but they told me something . . . Yesterday it was just rest. To-day, they — they tried to smooth my hair, just as you would expect them to do. The hand slipped once. It rested on my face . . .'

Sara leaned forward. 'Yes?' she questioned.

'I lifted it back, and her fingers pressed a little. They had a message all right . . .'

'Of recognition? You felt that?'

'All the time — nothing else. I held my breath, time and again, when the fingers stopped suddenly — oh, I wouldn't say why they stopped, weakness, I think; but this is what I'm sure of, that she's learning her son over again.'

'Oh,' cried the girl, passionately intent, 'what do you mean?'

‘That what her fingers tell her now is what she will remember as right.’

Sara questioned with her eyes, but met confident reassurance in his frank look. She heaved a deep sigh of relief. ‘I thought it only for a day, for an hour,’ she pleaded with humility. ‘They said so.’

‘Do you want it that way?’ he asked gravely.

She straightened at that, and her glance was all but indignant. ‘Oh, no, no,’ she denied, ‘but you . . .’

‘You thought I could make a dying woman happy. Perhaps I’ve made her live. Where’s the kick?’

‘But you?’ she repeated.

‘A prescription, to be taken as long as needed.’

‘You will do that?’ she cried eagerly.

‘If you’ve any other thought, guess again. If I should go away now, what would happen?’

‘She would die,’ she whispered.

‘Sure — pretty sure, anyway. I haven’t got a choice, have I? She might have lived if I had never gone to the hospital, nobody can say. But now, after I have gone, to lose me ——’

‘Oh, yes, it’s true.’

‘Murder, nothing less. She may be a cripple, she may be blind; she might say, others might say, better have died. Too late for me, for you.’ He leaned forward, deeply earnest. ‘I’ve not got a choice, no more you. I’ve just got to go on. See?’

Sara flung back her head and looked at him; that was all. He glanced about. ‘Real things don’t go in

these places,' he cautioned. 'Behave as if we were talking about the opera and last night's show.'

'I can now!' she cried. 'Oh, yes — now that I know you.' She sat up erect, her proud shoulders squared. The young man chuckled at the extraordinary change in her.

'And you said you were rested!' he exclaimed. 'I ought to have got this over to you last night. I'll bet you lay awake thinking what would happen if I dropped out. She'd moan for her son. How long could you stall her off? Could you say he had gone? You couldn't. Could you say you had heard a stranger talking and his voice was so like Tybo's you'd asked him to kneel by her bed so she could die in peace? Of course you couldn't. We're in it. We must see it through. We've got to forget to-morrow. She may not live. If that's to be the end, you'll be glad you made her happy. If she gets better — well, she'll be out of danger when we have to own up.'

'Oh, I was mad,' Sara murmured.

'Of course you were; so would anybody be who'd been knocked across a boulevard and seen an aunt smashed to bits. Now we've got our feet in the stirrups and must naturally hold on while the bronchos buck.'

Sara forced back tears of relief. 'You are wonderful,' she murmured.

'Don't be goofy,' he commanded with a grin.

'That's better. Fine! I s'pose I'm a funny kind of a lord, but I went all right yesterday, didn't I?'

'Those awful people!' She shivered, then she had to laugh. 'You were perfect,' she said, 'but I — I was nearly crazy. Haven't I let you in for some crime or other? Couldn't that dreadful cousin with the burning eyes have you arrested?'

'Until I have borrowed money from Cousin Ellis,' he laughed, 'I don't see how he's got me. What's bitten him?'

'I don't know the type,' Sara admitted. 'He hates us. I just had to introduce you. How could I help it? And I didn't dare to offend them.'

'Of course not. I say, I told you my name yesterday.' He chuckled. 'Do you remember it?' Sara shook her head. 'Well, here's me. I am Stanton Drew, twenty-three years old, of Mount Vernon, Ohio, and Kenyon College. I haven't got any folks, my girl threw me over for a successful man forty years old, and I grabbed an aunt's legacy of two thousand and headed for Paris. I got here yesterday morning, and was made a lord by a strange girl in a restaurant. Nothing to do but be a lord, you see; no engagements and nothing to say about it to the boys back home. So when I'm a common person again I just drop down and out, nobody the wiser, no harm done, and Stannie Drew back home waking from a dream. So it's all quite the berries, don't you agree?'

'It's simple as you tell it,' she agreed; 'I'd like to grovel at your feet. I wish I could.'

'Now listen to me,' he cried impatiently. 'You've got to drop that racket. I'm not in this for your sake. You don't owe me anything. It's for a lady down there in a hospital that I'm acting up.' He looked a severe rebuke, but grinned as Sara nodded and smiled. 'This chair is no pedestal and I'm no statue of any saint. I'm just a boy from home glad to help...' He stopped, jerking his head sidewise. Sara's eyes followed his signal. She jumped up as she saw Jennifer Evans tripping towards the desk. 'She hasn't seen us,' he cried, '... quick!'

Sara escaped. Lord Pontlottyn, to continue the name by which we know him best, saw, as he turned the corner into the hall, that he was discovered. He advanced with a bright and engaging smile. Jennifer's face flushed prettily and her eyes drooped as she met him halfway. His reassuring report from the hospital was received with eager interest.

'It is very hard for you, my lord,' she commented...

'Oh, drop it,' he said, 'I'm just Tybo; first cousins, you know.' He was embarrassed; this was not like yesterday, when a great emergency had keyed him up. His only thought was to get rid of her as pleasantly and quickly as he could, but he saw immediately that his advance was a mistake. Jennifer's lifted lids and smiling lips showed her keen delight.

‘I’d like it,’ she said softly, ‘and I’m Jennie to my relations.’

‘Oh, mama,’ he thought, ‘she wants it hotsy-hotsy.’ He braced himself and decided not to send for Sara. She had enough worries, he would face this alone.

‘Going back to-day, Jennie?’ he asked manfully, moving towards the door.

‘Yes, Tybo. We must.’

‘It’s mighty kind of you to come again.’ He moved a step or two farther along. ‘I mustn’t keep you. There’s some mouldy old tomb you want to see, I know.’

She assured him there was something much more important than a look at Père-la-Chaise, and that was good feeling in families. She had an hour to spare; had he?

‘But your husband,’ he blurted out desperately. ‘He hates me. I could see that. Anybody could. Where is he? Did he ask you to dig into these family matters? Does he want to be friends?’

‘Ellis,’ she explained, ‘wants to abolish the Second Chamber. I’ve often heard him debating about it. He’s a fine fiery speaker, Ellis is, and he can’t meet a lord and forget his principles, can he? But I said you couldn’t help it and weren’t to blame, and he was sorry when I told him he hadn’t been nice. You see, Tybo, you’re the head of the family, aren’t you? When Lord Llanthony is away, anyhow, and I do

want your advice most awfully about all this awful squabble.'

He laughed out loud at the ridiculous situation, and surrendered without conditions. 'Me; an adviser,' he cried gaily; 'come along.' He moved towards a seat, but saw through the window one of the old open victorias that still cruise about Paris. 'Let's laze about the old burg in a one-hoss shay,' he said. 'Excuse me while I get my hat.' He sent a note to Sara's room. 'I have taken her off,' he wrote. 'The way is clear for you if you want to go out.'

CHAPTER III

IF you had escaped greatly shaken but unhurt from a shattering accident, had believed that your companion had been killed, had waited for deadly hours in a hospital to learn that she was just alive, had spent a sleepless and anxious night, had seen and heard the next morning a dying woman moaning and muttering for the sound of a voice; and if you had heard that voice, what would you have done? Perhaps just what Sara did. Here is how it happened.

Opposite the Salpêtrière, across the great street market where buxom women sell great roasts and titbits and vegetables, stretches a long row of little restaurants, very simple, fairly clean, supported by the market people, the employees in the Jardin des Plantes and the farmers who arrive at the Gare d'Orléans. To one of these Sara went in search of food at such an unusual hour that she found the place deserted. In the far corner of the little room the proprietor, his sleeves rolled up, was pouring out endearing words to a little pet dog whose melancholy black head emerged from a thick white blanket of lather. Not considering that washing a dog on a dinner table was encouragement to appetite, Sara had turned to flee, and had almost whirled herself into the arms of a young man. To speak had been

for him almost imperative. 'Now what do you think of that?' he had said, laughing. She had stopped short, staring, and the quality of her look had been such that the young man had put an arm through hers and supported her to the street. 'They all look alike,' he had said, glancing up and down the long row. He had felt the girl shiver as he had spoken again and had tightened his grasp on her arm. 'You'll forget it soon,' he had said; 'it was no place for you anyhow.'

'Please,' Sara had uttered through dry lips and motioned across the wide space towards the frowning walls. So, wondering, silent, he had supported her through the great gate, across the broad courts, along the tree-sheltered avenue, to a seat beneath a flowing chestnut. There she had told him what had happened and why his voice had so greatly unnerved her. 'I haven't seen Tybo for years,' she had said. 'I was sure you were Tybo. I could not believe you were not. And it was such a disappointment. She mourns for him — all the time — all the time.'

As she had risen, thanking him, holding his hand, she had cried, almost wildly, 'Oh, if you only were Tybo!'

'Well, why not?'

They had stood silent, looking into each other's eyes for a long moment. They had turned and walked towards the casualty ward. 'She cannot live,' Sara had murmured, 'but she can die happy.'

That was how Stanton Drew became Lord Pontlottyn, and that was all the preparation which he had had for the meeting with 'the heir presumptive' and the pretty, pushing bride. No chance had come since to learn from Sara any details about the life of the real Tybo; yet he rashly thrust himself into a long tête-à-tête with this inquisitive and on-coming 'cousin by marriage,' who shot eager questions at him as the old horse drew them lazily along the banks of the Seine. His answers were reckless, because he feared above all things to hesitate. She pressed him for information about the ancestral home. His brow clouded as he confessed that a sore subject. He had been very unhappy there as a boy.

'But where is it, Tybo; in what county?'

'Oh, a gloomy hole!' he cried, 'all turrets and towers, no radiators, no bathrooms, wind howling through corridors, and all that. I used to lie awake shivering and when the wind made the branches tap the old lozenge windows, I was sure I could see the family ghost — not our family ghost, of course, but the one that went with the house.' He told her a lot about the place, but would not tell her where it was; and that is not surprising, for there was no place.

This pretty bride hung on his words, and gratified insatiable curiosity about the life of the great and the rich. A secret reader of novelettes of which her parents disapproved, she had far greater knowledge of

what such life ought to be than had her companion. Of course they kept hounds, he answered her, and nobody hacked to meets any more, as hack-drivers had become chauffeurs. Hunt breakfasts? Why should they puzzle her? When you hunted, you got up before dawn and had a special breakfast; if it was ducks, you went out with your ten-bore; if it was deer, your Winchester.

‘But the pictures in the weeklies?’ protested the surprised enquirer. ‘A lot of people about the front steps, in such beautiful clothes, and horses, and dogs, eating sandwiches — the people, I mean, not the dogs — and as for guns — guns for foxes?’

‘Oh, you mean that kind of thing?’ broke in the troubled but unabashed lordling. ‘Oh, we didn’t do that. We meant business and didn’t fool around with foxes.’

‘But what did you have the hounds for?’

‘To tree the coons, of course.’ He knew that must be wrong, but he rushed on. ‘We brought them over, you know, for a new form of sport. It was great fun.’ He described a coon hunt with gusto; the bride gurgled enthusiastic encouragement as he ran on.

‘What lovely things I shall have to tell Gwladys Williams,’ she murmured happily. ‘She’s my best friend. I shall tell her how I drove about Paris with my cousin, Lord Pontlottyn.’ Gravely she referred to his flaming past; delicately, under pressure, she told him the crimes with which he was charged. She

glowed with the thought that she was helping in the reformation of this prodigal. She encouraged him in his upward path and he encouraged her to go on talking, for his invention needed a rest. It was news to him, of course, that he was notorious and he was compelled to infer that he was regarded by Ellis Evans and no doubt by all the world as a combination of knave and fool; a trifle, he thought, for he would soon leave all this behind.

The driver had driven at his will and they were now in the Champs-Élysées. Inviting restaurants could be seen through the new spring leaves. 'Let's have lunch,' said Tybo.

Jennifer looked at him, frightened. 'Ellis said these places were not respectable,' she protested.

'He's mixed up. Come.'

She could not resist this last most wonderful taste of Paris with this delightful cousin, who was immensely relieved to find that the waiter spoke English and was helpful in suggestions. She had the meal of her life. She explained that Ellis was busy and told how she had traced a manufacturer to his secret cave and had made her husband become an importer.

'You ought to be the Paris buyer for Emporia Limited,' Tybo commented casually, as he came to a definite conclusion. He had had an idea that he might get friendly enough with this bride and perhaps afterwards with her husband to tell them the truth, and thus escape from an almost intolerable position;

but he now decided that he must see it through. Artless, sharp little Jennie had not brains enough to understand; her embittered husband had not heart enough to coöperate. It was not beyond possibility that Ellis Evans might notify the hospital.

‘You’re going to-night, sure?’ he demanded, after his momentary abstraction, but Jennie was not there. She had intercepted a small party just seating themselves at the adjoining table, and was talking with voluble excitement.

‘Of course you won’t remember me, Mrs. Finlay,’ she said, ‘but I’m the young lady — I was, I’m Mrs. Evans now, I mean. I gave the bouquet to the Queen when the King came to open the new dock, and I’m having dinner — lunch — here with my husband’s cousin, Lord Pontlottyn.’

‘With Lord Pontlottyn!’ Three pairs of discreetly reserved but astonished eyes were turned on the young man, who rose in calm resignation to the exposure; it was very clear that he was well known to the respective owners of those surprised eyes. It quickly appeared, however, that he was no more than a name to them.

‘I’m Colonel Finlay, Pontlottyn,’ the man said, holding out a friendly hand. ‘Awf’ly sorry. We’ve just come from Salpêtrière. A little hope, they say. Awf’ly sorry. Mrs. Finlay, my girl, Miss Finlay. ’Pon my word, awf’ly sorry for you. Your mother has been to us at the Moat.’

‘A dear friend,’ his wife corroborated. ‘May we sit with you and hear about it?’

A trio, beautifully turned out in sports clothes, the Colonel round, ruddy, silver-haired; the wife, made up just enough to tell the world that she was no back-number, just cool and stately enough to say that she was somebody in her home county, fresh-eyed and kindly; the daughter, slender, vigorous, with a jolly, husky voice and cheerful laugh, not pretty but friendly.

The young man, cornered, told them all about the accident. They listened with genuine interest and sympathy, perfectly expressed, just right. Their intense, courteously hidden curiosity about the son and heir was satisfied by this impostor, who knew himself regarded as a prodigal son and who in his comments explained away his American manner, intonation, and dress. He was not aware that his manner was naturally engaging, but he could feel a more friendly atmosphere as he talked. To an only son and heir much is forgiven.

They told him how they had come over for the dog show at the Tuileries and had by chance seen the paragraph. They must return that evening, but they would certainly make time to see Miss Desmond.

‘She’s never visited us,’ Mrs. Finlay said, ‘and we don’t know her very well, but she’s a charming girl.’

‘Ripping,’ Miss Finlay agreed, ‘and so pretty.’

‘I think so too,’ Jennifer also concurred. Miss

Finlay nodded and made conversation with the bride. 'I'm breeding pinscher-schnauzers,' she said; 'there's a big entry and I've bought two prize-winners for my stud. One is by Franz von der Friedenlust out of Annie von Oesterberg.' She enlarged with enthusiasm on the virtues of this breed, on the points of her purchase and on the high lineage of the pair. The pedigree of one went back to the 'Livres d'origines de la Société Royale Saint-Hubert' and to the 'Deutsches Hunde Stamm Buch.'

Happy Jennifer beamed; the Finlays were such 'real swells,' who appeared in grand style once in a while in her town when something very important was going on. Her perfect frankness amused Miss Finlay very much. 'Mother breeds old English sheep,' the latter said, 'and spends half the day brushing their coats.' Oh, no, not sheep, she explained, surprised, sheep dogs, the old English tail-less blues, and her father bred cockers; the Moat strain of spaniels was, of course, known all over Great Britain. As for herself, she wanted something new and was one of the pioneers with the pinscher-schnauzers. Oh, the name was not a joke; the breed was well known on this side of the Channel. Mrs. Evans must come up one day from Oldport and have a look at the dogs; over a week-end, so there would be plenty of time.

Jennie's head swam — a guest at the Moat, incredible. 'My husband,' she said proudly, 'is heir to the peerage after Ponty, but just now he's only a

small draper at Oldport. We're chapel, and teetotal, and — and everything that you're not, and perhaps you wouldn't want us.'

Miss Finlay's jolly laugh rang out. 'What does that matter these days? Give me your address and Mother will fix the time.'

Jennie produced a card. 'I'm on my wedding tour,' she began.

'Where's your husband?' laughed Miss Finlay.

Yes, where was he? Jennie jumped up in panic. 'Oh, I'm late!' she cried, 'I must have kept him waiting.'

Lord Pontlottyn, glad to escape, rose with her.

'We're coming straight on to Miss Desmond,' Mrs. Finlay said. 'Jacqueline is taking a brace of pinscher-schnauzers back to England, so we must come to you before we go to the show. If we shouldn't find her in, you'll tell her, won't you, how sorry we are. You'll come to us one day, won't you?'

'Do come,' the Colonel heartily endorsed. 'I'll book you for the first of October. But you've been such a lot in the States; are you good with a gun? Perhaps not; I'll put you down for the second shoot, then. I can mount you and there'll be cub huntin' with the Badmintons and the Barkeleys.'

This was Greek to the young man, but he said the right thing.

'I hope you can come,' said Jacqueline, 'and perhaps I'll ask you to fetch my brace of pinscher-

schnauzers. The poor things will be just out of their six months' quarantine.'

'You look far ahead, Jack,' her father said, smiling.

'I'll bring 'em,' his youthful lordship promised; 'that is, of course, if I come.'

Left alone with their luncheon, the Finlays looked at one another.

'Hot stuff once,' the father said; 'seems to have quieted down.'

'I simply can't believe he was the rotter they say he was,' was Jacqueline's contribution.

'He's very American,' Mrs. Finlay thought.

'A bloomin' Yankee,' her husband agreed, 'but a good sort all the same.'

'He'd be very good-looking if he was decently dressed,' said Jacqueline.

'He's only just come back,' her mother reminded them; 'he'll shed his awful rags in a week and his Yankee language in a month. This blow has sobered him. A year in England with his own class will make him over.'

'He's had no bringin' up,' the Colonel said, 'but we must make allowances. His father's self-made, remember.'

'And his mother American — poor dear, she would spoil him — so what chance had he? He'll be very rich.'

'The draper's bride,' said Jacqueline, 'is rather fun. I've asked her to come to us.'

‘If you like, Jack,’ said her mother, smiling, ‘but not with a house-party. They’d snub the poor child so frightfully.’

‘I wouldn’t expose her to that,’ the daughter agreed. ‘Relatives must be an awful drag when you’ve risen from the ranks.’

A nod from the parents and then the talk fell on dogs.

In the meantime, the subject of their conversation had escaped from the intrepid Jennifer and had hurried to Sara. The Finlays, he told her — never mind how he had met them — were due almost immediately. They were of the all-right kind, good solid friends; how about telling them the whole story? Somebody strong and dependable, to understand this mad muddle and back Sara up through thick and thin now, and in the future; Sara eagerly agreed with a sense of relief. The talk was interrupted by a courteous but insistent demand from the manager for the return of the official forms. The young man fished them out of his pocket. ‘Fill ’em out, Sara,’ he said, thrusting them across with apparent casual indifference.

‘Oh, oh,’ she murmured, ‘must I?’

He leaned over and in pretending to point to the blank lines whispered in her ear: ‘Nothing else to be done. I hope you know when and where Tybo was born.’

The document duly signed was handed over.

'You rushed me,' Sara charged hotly. 'That's the last straw, the final touch. Now I've made a criminal of you.' She started up, but he caught her arm and would not let her reclaim the paper.

'Lord Llanthony is due Friday,' he reminded her. 'He can fix things up somehow.'

'Oh, but you have to apply at the Préfecture of Police for a carte d'identité,' said the experienced Sara, 'and you have to produce your passport. And now, you're officially registered under a different name and dare not show your passport. Oh, I ——'

He made light of her fears, though he was not quite comfortable. 'We'll have the advice of Colonel Finlay,' he said. But that they could not get, for a note came for Sara; the Finlays were very sorry, but they could not possibly make time to call.

'Come for a walk,' he cried, 'we're getting the colliwoggles.'

'Oh, let's,' Sara accepted; 'you're safest in the streets.'

But she was wrong, for he ran straight into what Kentucky and Mark Twain called a feud and Corsica calls a vendetta. Paris, city of refugees, is a clearing-house for bitter hatreds engendered in the Ukraine, in the Caucasus, beyond the Urals, and elsewhere in the world. A Slav, grey-haired, of distinguished bearing, was shot so near that he toppled into the young man's arms. This happened in a tobacco store in the rue de Rivoli. A crowd gathered, doctor and officials

appeared; Tybo transferred his burden, slipped backward through the crowd, and, without haste, overtook Sara.

‘Did you find the cigarettes you wanted?’ she asked.

‘They don’t keep them.’

‘Those or nothing?’ she asked, smiling. ‘Such fidelity! Have you cut yourself?’

‘A scratch,’ he answered as he wiped a gout of blood from his hand. He looked around. He was not followed, he thought. He wondered whether the murderer had got away; whether any one other than himself could identify the man; whether his failure promptly to describe the fugitive meant escape for the latter. He saw how a secret, however innocent, may make a skulker of a man, and that assassins must go free if their arrest may mean the death of one woman and the dishonour of another. Dishonour; too strong a word? Well, what were the people of two hemispheres going to say if it came out in a Paris court that Miss Sara Desmond, alone in a Paris hotel, had introduced there a stranger as her cousin, Lord Pontlottyn? Shaken as he was, that was the word that came to him.

Sara eyed her silent companion. Searching for topics she asked, ‘And how do you like Paris so far?’

He pulled himself together; ‘It’s sure a city of adventure,’ he answered with a laugh which went over very well.

CHAPTER IV

TROUBLED, anxious, were these two young people as they walked along the streets of Paris side by side, but as neither wished the other to know that, they were apparently high-hearted, and they laughed and chatted. They flamed inside with mutual curiosity, but they felt shy and estranged, natural reaction after the sudden forced intimacy into which they had been violently flung. The presence of others, the needs of the moment, had whirled them as dancers at a masked ball; now the lights were out, the music had ceased, they were face to face in a daylight world. Passers-by, cheered by the sight of youth and gaiety, sometimes turned to catch another glimpse. A striking pair, these observers thought, ideal visitors to the bright city, knowing nothing of the sombre undercurrents flowing always since the war. The capacity of youth for duplicity is as deep as that of Paris; both at need may wear smiling faces for strangers; and both on impulse may rudely fling aside restraints.

The pair crossed to the Terrace of the Tuileries and seated themselves beneath a wide-branching tree. Whole families, including grandmother and babies, were scattered about, the women industriously knitting, the children playing. A vagrant English blackbird was singing sweetly amid the fresh spring

branches and the air was so buoyant that mere breathing almost lifted the spirits of two silent young people, but not quite; for he was thinking of a murdered man, and Sara, impetuous, fearless Sara, was afraid for the first time in her life, afraid of what she was to find out about this stranger by her side. She felt sudden hot repudiation of the immense debt of gratitude which she owed to him. The kinder he was, the more successful his imposture, the higher rose the mountain of obligation. That she knew herself shamelessly unfair only added to the burden; reason, sense, these were overwhelmed by this flood of feeling. A proud, independent spirit, helpless, unable to struggle, compelled to remain passive while coils twisted and bound more tightly with each hour that passed; coils not to be loosed even by the coming of her uncle. Responsibility would cease then; but the debt of obligation could never be paid. Hard, she thought, to owe so much to one's dearest friend, to parents, to a lover, a husband; to a stranger, crushing. She was on the top crest of a wave of rebellion which had been gathering force through the hours. It was unaccountable, unreasonable, astonishing, she felt, that a few hours could so utterly rob her of her cherished sense of independence.

The boy looked sidewise at her proud profile, at her quietly rich dress, at the shoe which bobbed rhythmically as she sat with crossed knees. She was outside of, beyond his world; he had had no chance of meeting

women of supreme elegance. He was now a little in awe of her; and startled by the sudden thought that he was her absolute master. It frightened him to perceive that he held in his hand this brilliant girl. Her humility of the morning, her gratitude, had sunk deep. He felt that he had clamped a yoke on her neck — a yoke which only his disappearance could lift; and that solution was, of course, not to be thought of. He had a plan worked out; yet how to tell her? — for each sentence must tighten her bond. He was amazed that the illness of one person could with such relentless hands drive others along new roads. He was, you see, unconsciously in sympathy with Sara and thinking, from his point of view, the same thoughts.

It was she who spoke first. 'Spring is always beautiful in Paris,' she said.

He looked into eyes which seemed to say that all the time she had been thinking about the weather. He too frankly admitted that he had been admiring the climate. They discussed this subject, eyeing each other. Sara advanced a step. She smiled and casually asked if he had been flirting with Jennifer.

'She's no hard seed,' he answered, 'and it was easy to make her sprout.' He laughed quite as though he felt like laughing. 'If she showed right, and I could make a guess that the Lemon wasn't as sour as he seemed, I thought I might clear up the position.'

'Oh, and did you?'

He shook his head. 'The Finlays prevented.' He ran on, not thinking. 'She handed out a fine line of hideous past to me. I drive autos into fountains and as a writer of love letters, I'm a piano tuner.'

Sara's right to red hair was proved. She flamed into anger that astonished the boy. She scored 'the catty dry-goods girl' with burning words, so apt, so concise, that the surprised listener admired her gift. He felt that this outburst was a relief to him, too.

It certainly was to Sara. Her brooding rancour spent itself on Jennifer. 'What she said was true,' she admitted at the end of her flare-up, 'and I've let you in for that, too.'

'What matter? I fade out. It's rather funny, you know.' He described the drive with cheerful exaggeration and Sara forced a smile.

'Listen,' he cried. 'Hear the barking? It's the chorus from the dog show over there. Most of them are pinscher-schnauzers and belong to Jack Finlay.' He told her about the meeting with this sporting family and she broke into laughter so contagious that it helped a lot.

'The Finlays,' she said, 'are friends of Auntie's. They live in the last of the old fortified manor houses of England. It is damp, for it has a moat all round it. They wouldn't drain the moat for a kingdom. It is gloomy, for the windows are high and narrow. They wouldn't cut a new one for the world. It was new-furnished in the first George's time, then shut up for

a century; so it's a perfect period house. If they needed a new table, they wouldn't buy one; not they; it would upset perfection. Auntie's told me all about them. A doggy lot — but jolly and straight; I'm sorry we couldn't tell them. You must rest under poor old Tybo's record.'

'Oh, if that's your only reason ——'

'Reason enough — and they're Auntie's friends, and ought to know. I'll write.'

'No. Let Lord Llanthony do that.'

'Of course. Only three days now, and it will come much better from him.'

'What's he like?'

Sara smiled. 'He has described himself: "obese, arbitrary, but able."''

'Fat, with a sense of humour?'

Sara nodded: 'A man's humour; hard, cynical now because of Tybo — an awful disappointment, of course; an only son, remember. Lovely to me, and thinks he is to Auntie; but she knows she comes second. You can't do what he has done unless business is first. He plunges ahead trampling, paying toll to her with handfals of diamonds and trunkfals of black fox skins and laces and clothes. She has everything and more; and she would give the lot for one hour of perfect understanding and true sympathy. She thinks he blames her for Tybo. Perhaps he does; but he doesn't say. Auntie is strong, resolute. She has never said it, but I know her life is empty.'

She looked up, with a twisted smile. 'I am utterly frank,' she said with gentle appeal. 'I must be. It's the only fair thing to you.' But he knew and she knew that her intimate confidence had come naturally. They had pulled each other from the slough of despond and were advancing fast towards complete understanding.

'And Tybo? Do you know where he is? Does his father?'

'Uncle knows; he must; he sends an allowance.'

'Then,' cried the young man confidently, 'our troubles are over. Lord Llanthony arrives, cables for Tybo; Tybo comes.'

Sara clasped her hands. 'Oh, splendid! But you? Two weeks more — at least; more likely, three.'

'That's nothing. Lord Llanthony will be here and, if he wants it my way, he'll back me up. Lady Llanthony will know, I suppose, when there's a change of Tybos. What matter? She will have Tybo. That's all that counts.'

Sara jumped up. 'I want to howl for joy,' she cried, 'and you don't want that. Let's walk.' She was off like a steam engine, but he caught her arm.

'Not that way,' he said; 'let's go round by the Louvre.' He had strong reason for avoiding a certain cigar store in the rue de Rivoli. 'It's a wow, this scheme,' he explained, 'and the only trouble is the next three days — until your uncle comes.'

Sara shot one of those thrilling glances to which he

objected so much. 'It's surely a wow, Mr. Drew,' she assented.

'A break, a bad break,' he criticized, laughing. 'I'm Tybo, Tybo all the time. You must get the habit, right now. You must act cousin, think cousin, never hesitate, never excite suspicion. You must talk Tybo to me. You mustn't say, "He did that, he lived there"; you must say, "Do you remember when you were about seven years old how you sneaked in the pantry and ate two pounds of icing off a big cake?" Get the habit. Just friendly and careless and rude. Then no waiter will be suspicious, and hotel managers will talk right to inquisitive policemen.'

Sara was prompt at the new game. 'Tybo,' she said, smiling, 'you're uncle's guest, of course. How about it? Can you manage until he comes?'

'Oodles, Sara.'

'In dollars or francs?'

'In my letter of credit.'

'Ah, ah, Tybo! I thought so; and that letter; what name are you going to sign?'

Crestfallen, he answered that it couldn't matter if he signed his own name at a bank; but Sara vigorously opposed this. It was buying trouble, she thought, to have two names in Paris. His common-sense forced agreement. In the end, Sara had possession of his pocket-book, containing every scrap of paper which identified him as Stanton Drew. He had a few dollars, and he thought he could make these

do until Lord Llanthony arrived. Sara disagreed, but respected his dislike to have money dealings with her. They taxied to the hospital, found all well, and sent the usual afternoon wireless to Lord Llanthony on the steamship headed for France.

‘I shall meet him at Cherbourg,’ Sara announced. ‘He looks on me as a little girl and doesn’t pay any attention to what I say. If I wired him that I must see him before he sees Auntie, and I missed him at the station here, he would go straight to her.’

‘And hear of Tybo ——’

‘Of course that mustn’t be.’

That night Sara carried the boy off to dinner. ‘We’ll get out of the way of everybody,’ she said. ‘Last year I was at the Luxembourg, and when lunch-time came, I went out of the lovely gardens, across the Boulevard de Saint-Michel, and there, under the shadow of the Sorbonne, I found the Café d’Harcourt. I had read how Guy d’Harcourt had founded a college in Paris in 1280 and how it was so successful that the great Louis, centuries afterwards, stole its name overnight. I felt sorry for the poor Bishop d’Harcourt. I was glad somebody remembered his name and I meant to drop a tear for him in my plate. But the lunch was too good.’

‘Tears, after six hundred and fifty years, a little salt, don’t you think?’

At their destination, they threaded their way through a cheerful crowd, laughing, sipping, taking

up most of the sidewalk in the jolly Paris way, through the thronged café inside, blue with smoke, past the musicians on the stairs, and they entered the restaurant to the sound of 'La Madelon,' sung by a dozen young officers in uniform, who were apparently waiting for their soup.

'It is hoped,' said the polite maître d'hôtel, 'that mademoiselle will pardon the *tohu-bohu*. They have passed their examinations at Saint-Cyr to-day and three are ordered to Morocco.'

'Nobody minds,' Sara said. 'If a telephone message comes for Miss Desmond, it's from my hotel for me.'

'Très bien, mademoiselle.'

She took her seat humming, 'La Madelon pour nous — n'est pas *severe*.'

At the next table to them sat an elderly gentleman gaily beating time to the music and humming, an amiable old lady drinking soup with gusto, and a younger couple vainly endeavouring to over talk the band. When silence fell Sara was astonished to catch the name of Ellis Evans, and she listened as the younger woman described to her husband the dark man with the burning eyes and mimicked the French of Jennifer.

'Would you believe it,' Sara said, 'these people live somewhere near here and are talking of their new customers, the Evanses.'

'Now what do you think of that?' He looked in-

credulously at the gay quartette. 'They don't do any business,' he declared; 'they're not serious enough.'

But Jennifer had seen them at work and would never believe that they could play; so come contrasting opinions.

'Talk to me about my childhood,' Tybo reminded her. 'Say, I hope there are hounds on the estate.'

'There is no estate. Uncle never bought one.'

'Gee — and the things I told Jennie.'

'He would not buy a place until Tybo had a son. I can see why, now.'

'Oh, me, too; no dark tabernacle and burnt-out candle for his brother's son. I say, what burning hate! As you said, it must have hit Lord Llanthony hard — a son like Tybo.'

Sara nodded. 'They don't talk about it any more. They've buried it. It's there, all the time in Auntie's heart. You see now what you mean to her; that all that she cared for in life has come back to her. Oh, I was mad . . .'

'Stop! We've been through all that.'

Sara nodded. 'I have an idea that Uncle went West about Tybo. He was coming to Europe with us, and suddenly changed his mind. He will spend money like water to get Tybo here.'

Sara's brilliant eyes glowed. An ending in sight, planned for, feasible; an ending to an imposture which separated her from all the throbbing life about her, which forced her to constant wariness, which

every hour wounded her frank, proud spirit; an ending to an intimacy made tolerable only by the clean honesty and simple candour of this young man, but no more than tolerable; she felt suddenly elated. She made her companion roar with laughter as she told him stories of his boyhood. The two pushed away thought of the sombre side of this narrative, but neither forgot that this was a rehearsal for his part at the hospital. Lady Llanthony could listen now, soon would talk; her son must take his share of any conversation.

They went straight back to the hotel, not daring to be too long out of touch. Callers had been there, Paris residents, friends of Lady Llanthony.

‘Lucky,’ Sara said; ‘they have seen Tybo — they would know him.’

‘Tell them.’

‘Not if I can help it. They are a smart lot and love gossip.’

‘I am sorry,’ he said, ‘that I did not go to another hotel under my own name.’

‘Impossible. A night summons — me waking the porter at some strange hotel at two in the morning and dragging you away. An hour lost, a policeman watching, perhaps; oh, no, you did just right.’

Sara’s words were proved just, for Tybo was waked in the night by the porter, mademoiselle awaited him below. He dressed hastily and went downstairs. A telephone message, Sara said, a heart attack, perhaps

not serious, but safer that they were there. They drove in silence, to find all danger over. The boy's presence had its usual extraordinary influence over the patient; after a time, Lady Llanthony slept peacefully.

It was two o'clock in the morning when they crossed the moonlit spaces of Salpêtrière, but nothing could soften the frown of those stern walls. The pair skirted the dense shadows as though avoiding an abyss, and hardly spoke until they had passed beneath the grim arch of the great gates. Silence and Paris in silver were around and in front of them.

CHAPTER V

EXCEPT for the shift which goes to work in limited localities when the clock strikes midnight, Paris is an early city. In certain noisy little spots, native labourers of both sexes work till dawn with a passionate eagerness to draw forth by ruse, cajolery, or force, the pocket-book of the foreigner. Music, dancing, and bright lights encourage the intense toil, which must be remunerative, for none ever heard of a strike at Montmartre. Neither the echo of the music nor the gleam of the lights ever reaches the solemn and stately structures on the isles of the Seine; Sara and Tybo had Notre Dame to themselves. The flying buttresses of the apse were as ladders of silver leading to crocheted pinnacles, to moon-mad gargoyles and to the ethereal spire, which Sara compared to a golden compass needle pointing the way to the zenith. Two thousand years of history were crowded into that heart of France, which began to pulse before Julius Cæsar came. Absorbed, silent, they walked by the side of the river, looking across at that great mediæval hospital, the Hôtel Dieu, at the Préfecture of the Seine, nerve center of Paris order, at the towers of the Conciergerie, sombre prison of evil memory, at the law courts, at the spire of that shut-in Gothic jewel casket, the holy chapel, built by Saint Louis to hold

the relics which he thought sacred; a picture seldom seen by visitors under conditions so novel and so interesting. An unnoted cloudlet, a spot of rain; Tybo caught the arm of Sara and rushed her across the quay, but the apparent shelter was no more than a street, 'the Cat who fishes,' the oldest perhaps, almost the narrowest in Paris. Elbows touched walls as they scudded along to find themselves at last in a deep doorway opposite the side of the Church of Saint-Sèverin. Sara chuckled; 'Just in time,' she said; 'it won't last long. What luck! We're in the oldest part of Paris, untouched, unspoilt.'

'But is it safe?'

'I think so, from all but ghosts.'

'It's stopped. Come.'

She gave a delighted little shiver. 'Oh, wait a minute. The moonlight on the old church — look. And the ghosts, the ghosts, look.'

He stared as two figures appeared in the rue Saint-Jacques; one in a high bell-crowned hat, a swallow-tail coat, tight trousers strapped beneath his shoes; the other in a wide hoopskirt with a belted waist like a wasp, and a poke bonnet. The girl, ballooning gracefully along, spoke: 'American ghosts,' whispered Sara, chuckling. 'Held up,' was what the girl said, and she laughed.

She sank, sank, into the middle of her flounced skirt, till the eager watchers doubted that she could recover; but she rose without effort from this pro-

found and graceful curtsy. Her companion at the same time had removed his remarkable hat and bowed with all the cumbrous dignity of a by-gone day. The object of this double greeting of splendour came now in sight; an 'agent de police,' who joyously exaggerated his official salute. In response to his courteous words, the two looked at each other blankly and shook their heads. The young man addressed the policeman in slow, clear English, speaking as a teacher might to an infant class. A torrent of French aided by pantomime came in answer; a further futile address as to a child — 'They don't speak French,' Tybo murmured, 'go help them.'

'S-s-h'; this fiercely whispered in his ear. 'He wants their Identity Cards.'

'Oh!' Tybo made himself as flat as he could against the door. A long and explosive colloquy followed, extremely polite, however, on both sides, and finally the sergeant gave it up. 'Vous irez faire un petit tour au dépôt,' he said as he caught the youth by the arm.

'Arrested, Sir Harry' — the girl cried in a voice of anguish. It was only a fierce clutch on Tybo's arm that kept him from rushing to a rescue by force; at the same time the girl was clinging hard to the policeman, pleading in childish frenzy, ignoring his friendly voice, his reassuring smile. She was so unbridled in her foolish terror that the policeman began to get annoyed.

'Sir Harry, Sir Harry,' wailed the girl, 'show him who we are, show him your card.'

'The idiot,' murmured Sara, 'that's all he wants.'

That was all; friendship was immediately restored; a cursory glance at the documents, a further exchange of elaborate ceremonial — then the rain began again and the young people scurried to the same shelter that held an ambushed pair.

'Hush,' murmured Sara, 'we have no cards.'

Not a word; but the intruders, with one thought, touched shoulders as though on dress parade. Tybo crouched behind skirts that would have hid three of him and Sara's head slid down until sheltered by broad padded shoulders. The agent, unsuspecting, passed by with an amused salute.

'La, la,' sighed the girl in a languishing voice; 'I was vastly alarmed, Sir Harry; I think, I fear, I am going to faint.' Her bonneted head drooped; Tybo's arms clasped her wasp waist. 'The danger is over,' he murmured with manly encouragement. Sara tittered. 'None of your vapours, miss,' admonished he of the bell-crowned hat. He stepped out, turned, ceremoniously saluted Sara and extended a high-held hand.

Sara advanced with him into the moonlight. The girl in the poke bonnet began softly to whistle. The pair in the grimy street solemnly danced stately steps of the minuet, Sara's short skirts ludicrously impairing dignity.

The band, meaning the girl who whistled, clapped

enthusiastic hands, Tybo looked on, dazed, the long projecting gargoyles on the church grinned hideously in the moonlight. A footstep — the four sprang to shelter; but the intruder who emerged from the shadows was only a homeless wanderer.

Bell-top hat gave him money; Crinoline gave him talk, voluble, nasal, odd-sounding French. The weary tramp actually laughed as he passed on. Sara chuckled. She knew now that this pair of madcaps had such perfect command of French that they knew its argot and that the scene with the policeman had been a spontaneous, improvised comedy, solely for their own amusement.

‘Un petit tour au dépôt; what is that?’ she asked.

‘Slang for juggled,’ laughed Bell-top. ‘An hour in the anteroom of the prison while they look you up. It’s nothing. They are dreadful polite.’

‘But how do they look you up, and where, and why?’ asked the vitally interested Tybo.

‘Your home, your apartment, your hotel; there’s a round up to-night, “un râfle,” the professors call it, but the slang is “rifle.” They have a little way of dropping suddenly down on a ward and raking it over. This is the fifth arrondissement. Every den in it, every cheap lodging-house, every suspicious place, has probably been visited; and every one walking is asked for his papers.’

‘Do they stop taxis?’ Sara asked.

‘No, but neither do you,’ the girl answered. ‘You

can't get a free one unless you cross to the right bank, and you'd be stopped at least twice — you don't want to be stopped?'

The four had been examining one another in the moonlight and when Sara said 'Inconvenient,' these two masqueraders, without exchanging a glance, were moved by a simultaneous impulse. The young man, with a grave polite 'pardon,' swiftly removed Tybo's hat and replaced it with the bell-top. The girl's poke bonnet promptly extinguished Sara's red head. They linked arms with the unresisting captives and emerged four abreast into the rue Saint-Jacques. The two in fancy dress asked no information, showed no curiosity, gave no names, volunteered no explanations; they seemed to suggest that these trifles did not matter. They started singing, simultaneously, the same gay song, one of those of Béranger that made the grisettes of Paris pounce on him and twine him in rose garlands at the Closerie des Lilas — the subject of a well-known picture. That song was a passport; the next 'agent de police' whom they met beat time with his baton, and let them go by with a smiling salute. The scheme did not work, as they paused for an instant in front of the Panthéon and looked at the forest of moon-gilt pillars surmounted by the great dome. Their cartes d'identités were courteously demanded. They had come away from the bal Gavarni to see the Panthéon in the moonlight the youth gaily explained. They had shown the cards twice. His clothes had no

proper pockets; there they were; monsieur l'agent could feel them; but to get them out it would, alas, be necessary to disrobe.

The papers were there; two of them, at any rate, where the ingenious youth had stuffed them, down beneath the high belt of his skin-tight trousers. The ruse succeeded; the policeman laughed and let them pass. Perspiration ran down the cheeks of that one who wore the bell-crowned hat above the Cincinnati clothes; but the others went on as though the incident meant nothing. Though it was clear that these two madcaps had some plan, Tybo had fear that it led to a ludicrous end. What and where was this bal Gavarni, of which he had already heard from his newfound friend with the same frat pin? He nerved himself for sudden introduction into some wild merriment where his absurd mixture of dress must meet hilarious reception. He admired the gallant spirit of Sara, who accepted this heaven-sent help without question and apparently without care; she knew some of their songs and she joined in with apparent irresponsible gaiety. He believed her manner was assumed, that she was meeting the mood of these helpful revellers. He felt that he must contribute his share; in a sudden pause he gathered his forces and let out his college yell. As the rue Saint-Jacques had narrowed greatly, it rang through the canyon, echoing and reëchoing against the silent shuttered houses and trailing off as spits of thunder after a storm. A genial slap on the shoulder

from the young man, a tightened pressure on the arm from the girl, a general sense of increased amity — these were his rewards. He felt that he had proved his right to be one of what was now a mad quartette. They twisted round corners, entered a gloomy archway, passed through a door invisibly opened — these concierges, don't they ever sleep? — and climbed wide, circling stairs suddenly lighted by unseen methods. A large key, produced by the girl after fumbling in an immense pocket in her balloon skirt, admitted them to a small hall. They passed into a large studio and living-room, beautifully furnished, in perfect order. Sara laughed as she glanced about. She was intensely relieved to find that these lunatics had some standards. She had guessed aright at the first sight of them; most of their moments were sane.

'There's my room,' said the girl to Sara, pointing. 'Go to bed, if you're tired.' She glanced at Sara's unringed wedding finger, then at Tybo. 'Have a nap there if you like.' She nodded towards a huge sofa. 'We must get back to the ball.'

'Drinks, eats, in the sideboard and in the kitchen,' the young host said. 'Help yourselves. Make yourselves at home. Don't think of going too early. Workman's cars are crowded and there are no taxis till nine or so. We'll be back by then.'

They waved their hands and rushed away. Sara and Tybo looked at each other.

'Heaven sent them,' said Sara, laughing.

'Strange angels — but efficient; twins, of course.'

Sara nodded. 'Clever; Saint-Sèverin by moonlight.' She was standing before an easel. 'That's why they left the ball; to get the right light on the old church. How lucky for us.' She glanced at a large portfolio lying on a table. 'Frank from Peter,' she read; 'that doesn't help us much. It's a girl's writing. I suppose she's Peter. Here's your Gavarni ball.' Together they glanced over the long series of colored prints by this observant and skilful artist depicting student life in the 1840's — that period when eccentricity of dress and conduct attained its height. Some scenes were laid in the 'Closerie des Lilas.' 'I've got it now,' Sara explained. 'The Bal Bullier is the modern successor to the Little Farm of the Lilacs, and once in a while there's a big gala there.'

She went over and examined a rough charcoal drawing pinned carelessly to a hanging tapestry which was beautifully worked, with colors chastened by age.

'This proves it,' she said, chuckling.

'Proves what?'

'That Peter is genuine clear through, that she has no self-consciousness.'

'They were acting up a little,' Tybo asserted.

'Oh, sure; this is a gala night, remember. Another night, they might perhaps ask who we were. Rather sweet, don't you think, trusting us with all this?'

'They sized you up all right, Sara. They're a pair of weasels.'

'You don't look exactly like a thief yourself,' Sara retorted.

'What proves what?' he asked.

'This caricature. Oh, it's here, all right; but how many girls would leave it about? She is thin; look at those bones. Her nose is — well, not Grecian; look at that insignificant knob. Her mouth is on the large side; see those fangs. Every fault is exaggerated, yet her kindness and jolly air are there.'

'Most attractive, for all your criticisms.'

'Criticisms? Praise. An artist did that.'

'Got 'em,' he cried, glancing at envelopes on the chimney piece. 'He's Francis Archer; she's Frances. Hungry?'

Sara shook her head. 'I'm for a nap,' she said. She came back from the bedroom with a pillow and a rug. 'Just in case you get chilly. Now you won't have to wrap yourself in that gorgeous cloth of gold.' She laughed and disappeared.

Tybo looked at the soft, inviting sofa piled high with cushions and sternly resolved not to be discovered dishevelled and heavy-eyed by bright, returning revellers. He sat down in a stiff ceremonial chair, which once might have graced a throne room, and set himself to serious reflection on the evil luck that each day widened the circle which knew him as Lord Pontlottyn. Never, he decided, had a con man,

hiding behind an alias for crooked reasons, had so many acquaintances thrust on him. Everything he did pushed him into somebody else's business. And now, of course, the wrong man would be arrested for that murder. He couldn't stand for that. He'd got to look into that business, all right. There were limits . . .

He woke to a furtive sound. Dawn had passed, and enough light filtered through closed shutters to outline a figure bending over a desk across the room. Was that stealthy opening of a drawer the act of his host, considerate of a sleeper? He saw the outline of an oddly shaped cap, of a short coat; saw its pocket stuffed with something from the drawer; saw a rough beard as the man turned. He closed his eyes, heard catlike steps pause by his side, heard them go on. He leaped up, caught two wrists, pressed his knee in the intruder's back; the man had to go down, down on his face. Tybo, very powerful in the arms, held these wrists in a grasp of iron. He had read of these agile Paris burglars, of their accepted principle that dead men tell no tales. His prisoner uttered no sound, offered no struggle; dared not, indeed; a wriggle might mean one or two broken wrists.

Tybo, kneeling, thought of calling Sara, that she might recover the loot and the man then be freed. He did not like the thought of her hands in the burglar's pocket, nor of disturbing and probably greatly alarming her. It was abhorrent that the man should escape; but that must be arranged. The Archers must be

told why Tybo Evans dared not face publicity. An escaped murderer, a freed burglar; decidedly, this living under an assumed name was a danger to society.

The door opened; voices; the revellers had returned; the youth in the bell-top hat and the billowing girl. One glance — the young man bounded across and flung open a shutter; the twins then stood shoulder to shoulder examining with a calm curiosity the captor and his prey.

‘Frisk him,’ Tybo commanded sharply. ‘My hands are weakening. He’s cleaned out your desk.’

‘Don’t loose him,’ Archer said as he sat down deliberately on the floor.

‘Don’t hurt him,’ said this odd girl; her voice oozed sympathy. It nettled Tybo.

‘Look for a knife or a pistol,’ he ordered curtly. ‘Oh, get a move on.’

‘You forget my trousers,’ the young man pleaded. ‘I can’t bend.’ He drew a pile of paper money from the burglar’s pocket; thousand-franc notes, Tybo saw. He flung his head back, naturally elated, and glanced at the girl.

‘Poor fellow,’ she murmured softly. ‘He looks so emaciated.’

‘Emaciated,’ echoed the indignant Tybo. ‘He’s fat; he’s soft.’

‘Probably almost a moron,’ said the girl with a sigh of sympathy. ‘He’s never had a chance. He doesn’t know any better.’

'Oh, all right,' Tybo cried rudely. 'When we know he can't knife us or shoot us as he strolls away, we'll let him go.' It was what he wanted, but he was profoundly disgusted with this sentimentality. He looked up, frowning. The girl's face was buried in her hands and her shoulders were shaking. He muttered a word of impatience.

Young Archer uttered a sharp command in French. 'I'm telling him to turn over and throw his hands above his head. Let go, please. If he doesn't do what he's told, he knows I'll stamp on his face. Help me up, Peter.'

Tybo grinned; there was nothing maudlin about the young man, anyhow. The silent bearded man obeyed orders. He lay with closed eyes while Tybo carefully felt for weapons.

'What a wicked, horrible face!' the girl said, bending over. 'Oh, well, he's not for the abattoir, luckily.'

'The abattoir?' echoed the staring Tybo, pausing in his operations.

'Oh, that's his language for the death cell. The Bishop will give him about ten years at college.'

This thieves' argot jarred on Tybo — and he was disconcerted by the sudden irresponsible change of attitude. 'He's not armed,' he said, rising. A touch of his toe told the burglar that he might rise.

The latter scrambled to his feet, solemnly produced two dollar bills and handed one to each of the twins. 'You win,' he said in English.

‘Thank you,’ they murmured politely, without a smile.

‘Now for the breakfast,’ Archer said, heading for the kitchen. The girl slipped away. Tybo, mad clear through at the complete sell, wanted to hit somebody hard; but he had enough self-control not to add to the joy of the plotters. ‘You took a great risk,’ he said to the burglar; ‘I might have shot you.’

The bearded stranger came over and peered into his face. ‘I thought I knew the voice,’ he cried with a high elation. He extended a hand. ‘Put it there, Lord Pontlottyn.’

Tybo, petrified, could only stare. The other chuckled, took off the weird student’s cap of the forties, unhooked the bushy beard of that day, and stood revealed as Mr. Sam Tibbetts of Ann Arbor.

‘The name fits, I see,’ said Tibbetts with a grin. ‘There’s no mystery about it. I met an Englishman, one of these peerists, they call them, that knows all about heraldry and coats of arms and genealogies. I was telling him about you ——’

‘And why am I worth discussing?’ asked the annoyed young man.

‘Hmph!’ That was all.

‘But why?’ Tybo persisted.

‘You’ve got feathers down to your spurs, old boy, and you scream like an eagle; and then you say it’s the lion roaring.’ He laughed. ‘Of course, there’s a reason; you told me — a good reason; but if a fella

sees a lion with feathers, why, naturally, he talks about it, doesn't he?'

'I suppose he does,' admitted the feathered lion.

'Very well, then. I mention Tybo Evans. Up go the ears of Mr. Peerist. 'Fauncy,' he says, 'there can't be two Evans families with that first name.' Then he explains that Lord Llanthony has only one son, Tybo Evans, Lord Pontlottyn, and says that you are the lord, or belong to some younger branch. Well, I have a shot at it — a shot's coming to me after the way you threw me — and it hit the mark.'

'I hate the title.'

He received an approving pat on the shoulder. 'You've got the devil's own grip,' said Tibbetts, rubbing his wrists. 'Archer told me of strangers in the studio, and when we came, I backed myself to get away with the money.' He glanced at the caricature. 'Pretty good,' he said, eyeing it with critical approval. 'I did it.' He went over to the desk which he had pretended to rob and searched out a paper. 'But this is better. How's that from memory? Just one sight of her; but perhaps you don't remember that flaming girl in your hotel, the girl with the untamed face, with the gorgeous halo of red hair. Yes, all right, I'm coming.' He ran to the kitchen in answer to a summons, leaving Tybo glowering at the brilliant sketch of Sara. The smell of coffee and the sound of sizzling pleasantly accompanied the young host, who came with news that the bathroom was ready. They

examined each other with the courteous scrutiny that one might expect from two discharged lunatics who meet for the first time outside the asylum. Tybo saw a slender youth, preternaturally solemn except for the impish brown eyes, which gave the rest of the face away. He felt a slight constraint, an almost imperceptible change in Archer's manner. As he shaved and washed his face, he thought this a natural reaction after the mad night; breakfast would correct all that.

It did not. When Sara came radiant from the bath, dressed in borrowed clothes, Tibbetts was frankly angry. He had reason; a friend, certainly new made, but wearing the same frat pin, had tacitly denied acquaintance with Sara, had not explained that she was a cousin. Tibbetts knew why. These English had friends whom they never took to their homes, with whom they dined at clubs or restaurants, but who were not good enough to meet their women. That might go with Englishmen, but not with Americans. It cut deep. He was no more than coldly civil to Tybo, whom he thought to annoy by attentions to Sara; but a stronger motive led that way — he made no secret of his admiration. His sketch and his calling allowed superlatives. A painter may comment on a complexion, on hair, on eyes, with professional directness. Sara was frankly pleased. She loved the sketch. Secretly she contrasted it with the caricature; flattery indeed that a stranger from memory

had drawn her without one pleasantly malicious line, one exaggerated stroke. Perhaps some sittings could be arranged, she said.

‘Fine!’ Tybo cried. ‘If you can paint like you draw, Tibbetts, it will be a wonder.’

‘I’m glad your lordship approves,’ blurted out the sore painter.

Sara looked up surprised, but it was clear that the others had heard. Tybo looked reproach.

‘You can’t travel incog. in the Latin Quarter,’ Tibbetts said aggressively.

‘Shut up, Tibby,’ Miss Archer ordered. ‘We are glad to welcome Mr. Evans under no name — we did last night — or under any name he likes.’ Stilted courtesy — from Miss Peter Archer; worse than rudeness.

‘That’s so,’ gravely confirmed her brother.

Tybo looked at the twins, who were trying so hard to be polite, to hide vague antagonism. He felt a pang as he realized for the first time the mysterious tie of nationality. The camaraderie, the bubbling cordiality gone, chilled by the cool breeze of another flag; not meant, not intentional, just vanished in obedience to a human instinct. It was as though he had won open arms under false pretences. These pretences exploded, arms had closed against him without volition or intention. The incident had a meaning for Tybo that he never forgot. He warmly liked these bright-hearted twins and their weird way

of doing things, and they couldn't be intimate and cheery and irresponsible because they believed that he was not of their country.

They all ate like wolves, notwithstanding the slight coolness, and they laughed over the happenings of the night; but intimacy could not be regained. Sam Tibbetts left, openly cross with Sara because she would not fix a time for a sitting, frankly hostile towards Tybo; but his departure did not help matters. Sara, silent, thoughtful, eyed her twin hosts and came to a sudden decision. She told them the whole story. It won them instantly, of course; a masquerade after their own hearts. They did not forget to sympathize with the grave reason, but sympathy could not stifle their prankish dispositions. They teased the American lord with merciless good humour. Tybo did not care. Camaraderie, intimacy, were restored. Suddenly the twins became serious, as though at the ring of a bell.

'What can we do to help?' they asked with one voice.

'Tibbetts is across me,' Tybo said. 'Is it safe to tell him?'

'No'; this decisively in accord.

'He blurts out everything,' said Archer.

'He can't keep a secret,' the twin confirmed.

'You're mighty kind,' said Tybo, 'but you've done a lot already and I don't think there's anything more.'

But Peter took Sara away. Putting hands on hips and squaring up in front of Sara, she delivered herself thus: 'That's a nice kid, but you're rammed tight in his pocket. That hurts. Devilish luck might bring you two face to face with some fella that knows the real Tybo. You're in dutch then.' The solemn-eyed imp tilted up and down on toes and heels and with explosive earnestness issued an ultimatum. 'This cannot go on.'

Sara, touched, amused, said that it must go on till her uncle came.

'It shall not.' Peter cocked her head on one side and half-closed her eyes. 'Get it straight — no friend of mine is going to be found at a hotel with a boy she pretends is her cousin.'

'Forget that'; Sara flung up her chin; 'I must.'

'If you're found out, you won't be allowed to,' Peter retorted with a dark scowl. 'You're a good sport, but you've got to be protected from yourself. Oh! you smile, do you?' Peter became melodramatic. 'Your good name is in danger,' she hissed.

Sara laughed outright; so did Peter.

'Well, old dear,' cried the latter, 'which shall come here to stay — you or him?'

Restrained Sara flung her arms round the other's neck. 'You dear,' she murmured.

'Cut it,' Peter said, disengaging herself. 'I wish it was you, but he couldn't take a night telephone call, could he? All right; him, then. Come. We'll tell the

hefty lad he's got to lie low here.' She chuckled. 'Sam Tibbetts boxes,' she remarked irrelevantly, 'and now he's let a British nobleman get him in a strangle hold. That wound to his pride will bleed.'

They found an empty room. A note explained; the two had gone to buy an outfit. 'My lord honours our poor dwelling,' wrote the brother. Peter snickered. 'You just wait till you see the coat Frank buys him.' To puzzled Sara, she explained. 'Don't you see? They've decided just as we did. It's often that way with Frank and me; we never think, but we jump to the same conclusions. Milord is not going back to the hotel, you see; no unnecessary risks.'

Two servants appeared from somewhere. Light-hearted Sara, with intense amusement, watched the effective young housekeeper direct their movements. It took brains and training to keep a large and luxurious apartment like this in order; the girl seemed to have neither, as she darted about, but a miraculous cleanliness resulted in a very short time; even the bottoms of the Du Barry vases were dusted.

'There's New England blood in me, on my mother's side,' called out Peter, as she tested corners with a finger. 'When you go, I'll go with you if you'll give me lunch.' Grateful Sara, leaving a hotel at midnight, thus had support in returning the next day at noon. 'I'll borrow your room when you go to Cherbourg,' Peter sang out.

Sara thought this extraordinarily thoughtful. She

had explained that she must meet her uncle at his landing port; that though in her last wireless she had said that he must see her before going to the hospital, he regarded her still as an irresponsible child and would forget the request. If she should miss him at the Paris station and he should go straight to the hospital, he would hear of a son. He would blurt out a denial, of course, even to his wife; almost any man would. The way was now clear; this shrewd girl in her room at night, to receive possible messages, would immediately rush off to her brother's and get Tybo. It is not surprising that Sara felt that kind of gaiety that a nurse off duty ought to encourage. The sick-room is pressed to the back of the brain.

'He'll certainly buy a new suit,' Peter announced, bubbling laughter.

'Why should he?'

'Oh, Frank will see to that. He won't look ridiculous, but we'll make him think he does. Frank will never lose that chance.' So exactly, as Sara had discovered, did these twins think alike, that she accepted the new clothes as a fact.

When the two boys appeared, Peter let out a whoop, grabbed hands, and the three danced round the embarrassed Tybo, singing 'Hail to the Chief.' There was only one thing to comment on — the cut in waist. They made the most of that. Ah, la belle ceinture! — Oh, the svelte figure! — The beautiful Frenchman! Tybo manfully accepted all this cheery

nonsense as though he liked it. When admiration was exhausted, Sara suggested that these delightful friends might have something to do for themselves. She was told that the day after a Gavarni ball was always a holiday, and that Peter was at her service; so the two girls left together for the hotel.

'Now,' said Frank Archer, 'let's find out about this murder. We'll haunt the law courts.' They walked up the Boulevard Saint-Michel engaged in a hot discussion. The morning papers had contained a full report of the political murder and had stated that the assassin was known and must soon be caught. If he had since been apprehended, the two were agreed that the evidence of Tybo would be superfluous and need not be offered. But how, if the wrong man had been arrested? In such most improbable contingency, Tybo was firm in his resolve immediately to speak up. Weeks must pass, Frank Archer contended, before trial and conviction; the right man might be found in the meantime. If not, Lord Llanthony would have arrived. Tybo's papers would be in order and he would have strong support; better still, his muddle would be straightened out, and he could come forward in his real name. The boy was inflexible; he would leave no man one hour under a false charge of murder. That there had been a conspiracy of several to compass the death, the papers had stated; that the wrong man charged might have been one of the conspirators made no difference; there were limits; he had

reached his, when he had not volunteered a description of the man. Lots of people had been around; it had happened in a flash; perhaps none but him had seen the deed, or would know the man. His silence perhaps had permitted an escape.

‘You’re a mule for stubbornness,’ Frank Archer said, as they crossed the Pont Saint-Michel and went up the avenue that traverses the Isle de la Cité; ‘but luckily we’re talking in the air.’

He planted Tybo on a sidewalk chair in front of a café that faced the great iron gates of the Palais de Justice. ‘A citron pressé,’ he ordered. ‘Now I’ll reconnoitre; a man without a carte d’identité should not thrust his head in the lion’s mouth.’

The garçon brought the lemonade. Tybo sat and sipped, interested that no one about spoke French. A family came, tired and hot from exploring the Conciergerie. They tried in vain to order lemonade. ‘Pardon,’ Tybo said, ‘citron pressé.’ The father muttered a stiff thanks and the family turned their shoulders.

‘It’s always like that,’ said a friendly voice. ‘We Americans abroad are a lot of rabbits. We see a crook in everybody. At home, a man trusts his judgment. Here, if a fella gets lonely and wants to hear his own voice, the other fella runs.’

This began a friendly talk. It developed that this engaging young man was in Europe on a most extraordinary errand. Almoner of a great fortune left

by an eccentric uncle of French extraction, he was seeking worthy objects of benefaction, anywhere — but colleges, educational institutions, chiefly. Tybo, interested, ultimately mentioned his Alma Mater. The suggestion was favorably received, the name noted. The end was a mutual display of confidence. Tybo walked alone around the block with the young man's fat pocket-book. In turn, he surrendered his, comfortably lined, for Frank Archer had financed him; the young man did not return.

Archer came with the report that the assassin had not been captured. 'So far, so good. Now for déjeuner. I'm starving.' He led the way to a restaurant in the Place Saint-Michel. As they ate, the confidence man appeared.

'Give me a dollar, Frank,' he said, grinning as he flung down Tybo's pocket-book.

Archer roared with laughter as he slapped Tybo on the shoulder. 'Good sport!' He turned to his friend. 'Bill,' he cried, 'I thought you hadn't turned up. He didn't squeak.'

Tybo, duly introduced to Mr. Bill Wallace, said, 'Just to show your confidence, Mr. Wallace, let's see your wallet.' He opened this and extracted the note which he had inserted when walking round the block. He read it aloud. 'Archer has won.'

'When you work up another sell,' he told the two conspirators, 'don't do it in a tailor's shop when a man is "trying on." The looking-glasses see round corners.'

CHAPTER VI

TYBO sat, lost in thought, on a bench in the great garden of the Salpêtrière. He felt an immense sense of relief, for Lord Llanthony was due to arrive that day, was perhaps already on his way from Cherbourg with Sara. The end of responsibility was nearing and under happy conditions; for he had been told within the hour that the patient was almost certainly out of danger and that the remarkable partial recovery had been due as much to his presence and devotion as to any medical aid. He had been warmly congratulated and praised by his kind 'chirurgien' of the hospital, and, though he had understood little of the French, he had found it easy to guess the meaning. He had talked, too, a little with the sufferer and he had listened to her halting words of tenderness without a pang of regret. She had said that nothing mattered now that she had her son again, and, though he had been profoundly moved and had responded with genuine feeling, he had had no sense of guilt. As he had sat by the bedside and looked down into the unseeing eyes, at the softly smiling lips, expressing peace and happiness because he was there, because his hand clasped hers, he had been only glad that he had done as he had done. He was relieved too from fear of discovery. Her hand had wandered all

over his head and his face and had been content with what it found. There was no resemblance between him and the real Tybo, Sara had said, but she had afterwards qualified that; the shape of the head and the profile were not markedly different, she had thought. He had had a great fear that, as Lady Llanthony improved, she might detect the imposture; and such detection might have had dreadful consequences; he felt safe now, until the real Tybo came. If he should be told that Tybo could not be found, or could not or would not come — he refused to think about that! Of course the father could get the boy.

People passed and repassed, sometimes throwing an indifferent glance at the absorbed young man who obviously saw without seeing. He was thinking now of the approaching meeting with Lord Llanthony. The man was despotic, impetuous, Sara had reported, fond of his wife, quick of brain, generous outside of business. He would know all about the strange situation, for Sara had gone expressly to tell him. It did not greatly matter whether Lord Llanthony would approve or not. It did not greatly matter that he might express censure instead of gratitude. The important thing was that, approving or not, he should support the situation until the son should arrive. Tybo could conceive a man, from a high regard for truth, perhaps, cruelly exposing the deception to his wife. That motive was ruled out with Lord Llanthony. But the man might so profoundly resent the

intervention of a stranger in his intimate family life as curtly to reject further help. That was possible. If that was to come, well, there was no help for that. Sara had said that it could not happen; that her uncle would never dream of sacrificing his wife to any prejudice. But Tybo had an idea that Sara was gallantly hiding some qualms. Not a hint from her; oh, no, that was not her way; she had waved him a gay good-bye as the train had left the night before, bearing her to an uncle who was to be told that a son had thrust himself into the family. An incredible tale; and Lord Llanthony was hearing it now in all probability.

‘Obese, arbitrary, but able’; he recalled these words of Sara’s; and then he stared about him blinking his eyes. He had the conviction that a fat man of commanding manner was in sight. He saw no such person, but he knew such a figure had passed. That he had seen it came belated to his knowledge. Lord Llanthony had gone by. Ahead of train-time by two hours; and he was to have been taken to the Archer apartment. Could Sara have missed him? The startled young man hurried back to the waiting-room, hoping that all this was fantasy; but he was told that Lord Llanthony was in the sick-room. He did not dare to go up; that was impossible. But if Sara had missed her uncle, what would this man say and do when a broken wife murmured words of a son? He passed a bad half-hour under the trees; the

crowded waiting-room was no place for such a meeting as was coming. At last, slowly, dragging his feet, the stout man came, holding his hat in his hand and wiping the sweat from a grey-fringed brow.

Tybo hesitated; to break in after that meeting between husband and wife seemed sacrilege; but he felt that he had no choice.

‘Lord Llanthony!’

The man stopped dead, staring. His jaw fell. The powerful face went slack. Too late, the young man remembered the voice and feared to speak again. He pointed to the bench and sat down. He watched, silent, the working of a will of iron. He saw the jaw snap beneath the big moustache, the flabby face muscles harden, the eyes focus on him with an intent concentration; no antagonism, no suspicion; just alert enquiry; the boy could not analyze this, but he felt it. He got the quick impression of a big man, of one who waited to know before forming judgments.

‘So it’s you.’ The voice was almost natural, deep, pleasant-sounding. Lord Llanthony sat beside him, appraising him with a directness natural and forgivable at the moment.

‘Have you seen Sara?’

The listener did not move, but Tybo saw the fists clench hard.

‘The voice did it,’ the boy said. ‘It jars you at first, of course. Have you seen Sara?’ Lord Llanthony shook his head. ‘Then, then? . . .’

‘I thought she was mentally unstrung,’ his lordship answered; ‘I did not contradict her, of course. Afterwards the nurse, then the doctor; my son, here, in Paris! I did not deny.’

The boy drew a deep breath of relief. ‘And you knew that he was not; that he could not be?’

‘Yes, I knew that. You forget Sara; you came with Sara; she was the one to explain to me.’

The boy, impressed by the self-restraint which had not blurted out a denial of an imposture so surprising to a father, told the whole story. He thought at first that he had an antagonistic listener, but this brought no note of apology or pleading into his narration. He knew that his telling was not good, that it was jerky, disconnected; he did not know that his earnest candour was quickly winning a cynical listener, profoundly distrustful of men, but trained to quick and decisive judgments. Not a question, not a criticism of this detail or that, now and then a nod of assent; it sounded fantastic to the boy himself, this story of a meeting with Ellis Evans and his bride, with the Finlays, with the Archers. It seemed incredible in the retrospect, this stay under an alias and pretended relationship in the same hotel with Sara. But behind every detail lay the helpless figure of a woman in a hospital smiling happily when her hand rested on the head of a kneeling youth.

‘It should never have begun,’ the boy ended by saying. ‘Once begun, it could not end.’

‘But now?’

‘For you to say, Lord Llanthony.’

‘Indefinitely?’

‘Until you get your son here, if you ask it.’

The two looked into each other’s eyes. Lord Llanthony pressed the other’s shoulder. ‘Three weeks; a month, perhaps ——’

‘If you ask it.’

‘Come.’ He took the boy’s arm and leaned on it as they crossed the long high-walled courtyards. ‘Her broken words were all of you,’ he said. ‘No, it cannot end.’ He repeated this half-a-dozen times, sometimes whispering it as to himself. This was his only moment of faltering, this walk to the gate of Salpêtrière. In his waiting automobile he was again the strong man, calmly bearing his burden. He surprised Tybo by giving the correct address of the Archers. He had remembered even that unimportant detail.

‘I will drop you there,’ said Lord Llanthony. ‘Sara’s train has arrived. It’s due at 12.54. I will see her and come for you at five o’clock. Will that be convenient?’

‘Get this, Lord Llanthony. Everything is convenient until Tybo comes.’

‘Until Tybo comes’ — so poignant a sadness was conveyed in that utterance that the boy shivered. A long silence; the car drew up. The young man got out.

'I'm sending the car back for you straight away. Take your friends somewhere for lunch.'

'But, but ——'

Lord Llanthony gave some directions in French to the chauffeur. Tybo caught the words '*Mon fils*.' So the son was adopted.

'Tybo' — the word came without hesitation — 'be back here by five o'clock.'

The young man nodded, waved a hand, stood looking after the automobile. He felt profound weariness and an immense depression. He could not understand this. He did not know that he had been wound up tight for days and had run down with a crash, that his immense relief left him with spent nervous force. He felt a deep sympathy for this strong man who had faced without flinching a broken wife and a phantom son and had accepted so promptly an almost impossible set of conditions. The boy went up the stairs, slowly, with tired footsteps.

Lord Llanthony, in that automobile, was truly an object for sympathy, but not for the reasons supposed. He had shown more fortitude, more strength of will, than he had been credited with. He had worshipped an idol — his son. That worship had died long ago; repeated disappointments and the final death of hopes had been put behind him. All revived now but hope; a fresh-bleeding wound, poignantly inflicted; a son, a son such as he would have, a clean, simple boy with fearless eyes and

honest manner, forced on him: he must intimately know what might have been, in carrying out this pretence. A daily, hourly torment; memories revived with each sound of the voice; contrasts, bitter, piercing, forced on him by every action of the boy; an apparition evoked with every utterance. Most able men have the capacity to step outside their sorrows and broken hopes and contemplate the ruins. Lord Llanthony did this now. He thought this the most perverse ironic blow he had ever heard or read of. Too strong for remorse, too intelligent for superstition, he thought no nonsense about Fate, or Vengeance; he told himself that he had been the victim of a million to one chance — A million? Hundreds of millions against arrival at a bedside to find a Voice installed, an impostor enthroned — an honest impostor who must be supported.

It will be noted that he gave little thought to his wife. The breach was indeed far wider than Sara knew. When ambition of founding a family had been killed by the progressive degeneracy of a son, Lord Llanthony had immersed himself in gaining money and power. He cared for neither, but no one knew that. They resulted from his large and daring operations and these were eagerly undertaken to kill thought and time. The wife had screened, shielded, the boy; that had killed confidence. Afterwards, when the son had estranged his mother, there was a sealed compartment in the heart of both father and

mother. That had resulted in further divergence. They had become amiable friends and Lord Llanthony lavished more on her of material things than love would give. He gave her a son now, on her bed of pain, without hesitation. If he had still loved her, if perfect confidence had still existed between them, he might, perhaps, taking all risks, have told her the truth; for his presence would have consoled and comforted her. No such confession was possible; with characteristic vision and promptness he had accepted the alternative.

At the hotel, he metaphorically wiped an ice-cold sponge over his face, braced his mind, and found Sara, who literally leaped at him, just as he had expected she would. He knew precisely her state of mind and he said precisely the right thing: 'Everything is right. I have seen your aunt. I have seen the boy. I stand by everything. Rooms?' Sara nodded. 'Sitting-room?' She nodded. 'Take me there.' In his private salon of splendour he said, 'Please order lunch here.' Sara went to the house telephone. Lord Llanthony went to the bedroom. 'François,' he said, 'everything all right? Good. A cold bath, lay out a complete change, give me your Paris testimonials, then go. Return here at a quarter to five.' He glanced at Sara with surprise and admiration, as he heard her ordering the meal in a clear, controlled voice. When she had finished, he handed her the testimonials. 'Please confirm these by telephone,'

he said. Sara nodded. He went to change. When he came back in half an hour, lunch was on the table, and Sara was just leaving the telephone. He nodded approval as he heard her say to the waiter that they would ring when he was wanted.

‘You have grown up, Sara,’ he said, eyeing her. ‘I had not realized it.’ He kissed her with affection. ‘You have done well. Sit down; you must eat.’ He served her attentively. ‘I am very sorry. This morning has been worst of all for you.’ Her glance of assent held reproof. ‘I know — three wireless telegrams, saying always that I must see you first, I must see you first. Of course I thought them the kindly idea of an inexperienced girl who wished to prepare me for the change in your aunt. What else? A French official on board allowed me to join his special tug, to fly with him to Paris.’

‘Your man told me ——’

‘He found you promptly?’

‘Yes, considering your description.’ This a little drily. ‘He had been looking for a fillette — a lean scraggy girl, I think, with hair down her back.’

‘Sorry, Sara.’

‘But you’ve been seeing me all my life, you’ve seen me within a month.’

‘I’ve never looked at you till to-day,’ he confessed. ‘A bad return for what you’ve done — to give you that journey back from Cherbourg, unable to get at me, fearing everything ——’

‘Yes, yes,’ flamed Sara, ‘I saw you denying a son, and Auntie lying dead from the shock. Oh! — cruel egotism.’ Plain, blunt words flashed out. He heard with head bent in apology, without uttering a word of defence. They had never met before as man to man, this uncle and niece, and if he was astonished at her development, at her strength, she was equally surprised at his complete understanding of her feelings. ‘And — you and I meet,’ she ended by saying, ‘and you think to keep me from breaking down by keeping me busy with trifles. You need not have been afraid.’ Her lip curled.

‘It hasn’t kept you from breaking out,’ he suggested.

She smiled faintly; that was the beginning of a mutual understanding which greatly surprised and pleased her as it progressed. She told him the whole story from her side, and listened with immense relief to his affectionate approval of all that she had done.

‘They hope,’ he said, ‘that your aunt will live. They said that the boy’s presence did it. They praised him, Sara — and you. You and he always there when wanted; so faithful, so considerate. Eat — don’t stare. Of course I didn’t question them nor deny him. When you are my age, you will know how to listen and wait; the world will teach you that. Eat — remember that a nurse’s first duty is to keep fit for the sick-room. You are getting fresh courage

with every mouthful. Now, this boy, what have you to criticize in him? Dig deep. You like him, you trust him. So do I. What little word has he said, what little act has he done, that you wish had not been said or done?’

‘Not one.’

‘Good.’

Sara rose and rang. Another course was brought; he talked of his valet. ‘A steward in the ship,’ he said; ‘they let me have him. Testimonials confirmed?’

‘I got one, all right there; the other was away, but his maître d’hôtel remembered the man and spoke well of him.’

The waiters gone, the uncle’s next words brought an indignant flush to Sara’s cheek. ‘There is sacrilege in his conduct,’ he said; ‘and he has a genius for duplicity ——’

‘Oh, shameful!’

Her uncle pressed her hand. ‘Quiet, Sara. Suppose you read of it — of a boy who deceived ——’

Sara broke in with a ringing defence. Unpremeditated, on the spur of the moment, for that one time only; herself distraught, alone in Paris, bruised black and blue from the accident, still under the shock ——

‘You have convinced me,’ her uncle said.

‘It should not have been needed,’ was Sara’s retort.

‘You forget, Sara. I have seen him but once.

We must plan. He is our foundation. I must be sure.'

'Sorry, Uncle. You are right.'

His large, luminous eyes which redeemed the heavy face dwelt on her with admiration. 'Had he ever heard of me?' he asked.

'Never.'

'He did not know that I was very rich?'

Impulsive Sara jumped up so fiercely that she knocked her chair backward. She sat again with a glance of apology. 'Go on,' she said in a stifled voice.

'I search for a motive,' her uncle continued. 'Frankly, his conduct is incredible. He changes his whole life — for a stranger. He hides from the police under an assumed name — for a stranger. Sara, those hours at the hospital — they must be appalling.'

'They are not,' Sara said, marshalling all her brain. 'Not easy — oh, no, not easy. But he doesn't feel guilty. Ah, you ought to have seen that. You have the key to everything; the mad, blind beginning. "Once begun" — she flung out her hands. 'We've had no time to think; wait for you, that was all. If you think he's doing this for money' — this scornfully — 'go, and try to pay him. Then' — she bent her head and her voice was almost inaudible — 'go and tell Auntie.'

'Finish your lunch, Sara. If you don't eat, I won't

talk; and we must have our plans ready by five o'clock.'

'You say such horrid things.'

'To get the truth. Rich men learn that there are no disinterested motives. I thought, and you have confirmed my opinion — he is not mercenary. He does not think of that. But ——'

'Go on, Uncle: he is not guilty of sacrilege. He has not a genius for duplicity. He is not mercenary. We are agreed — what next?'

'I believe — I have known cases — in love at first sight.'

'The one thing you have said,' was Sara's calm answer, 'that doesn't cut.' She put her two elbows on the table and cupped her chin on her hands. 'Some uncles would have realized that we've had more important things to think of than that. It has never occurred to him.'

'How do you know?'

'A woman always knows,' said this modern girl with calm conviction. 'I see now,' she continued quietly, 'that, if he ever should ask me to marry him, I shall say yes.'

Her stupefied uncle, who had been learning for the first time, through that meal, of the younger generation of girls, asked why.

'To pay the debt — your debt and mine.'

'You are in love with him,' he charged.

'Bah! Have I had time to think of that?'

'Sorry, Sara. Girls grow up and I forget.'

'Satisfied now?' Her smile softened the rudeness of the words.

'Yes, that motive's ruled out.'

'Oh, ruled out! I've told you, over and over, that he met a distracted girl and helped her. That was the motive — enough for him.'

'Pardon, Sara. I had to know these things. I am completely satisfied. I am deeply grateful to you, to him.' He quickly won her back to affectionate intimacy.

When the table had been cleared, Sara asked him whether it had occurred to him that he had not told her the essential thing, the thing she had been burning to know. He did not need to reflect. Tybo, he told her, was in Idaho, was doing better, could be got back inside of a month. A telegram would be sent that afternoon. There was little hope that the victim of the accident would ever see again and she must always be more or less of an invalid. She could perhaps be moved within a week or two. She must not be too near Paris, where friends who knew the real Tybo might come unannounced. Climate, distance, beautiful surroundings, all pointed to the Loire district. Nurses, a doctor, if necessary, could be taken down; always there were châteaux to be let in Touraine. That must be Sara's job. Would she go down on the morrow to Tours, skirt the hillsides on the north bank of the river, rent or buy a furnished châ-

teau, and get expert Paris men down to prepare a suite for an invalid?

‘And if you had thought all this out,’ the astonished Sara exclaimed, ‘why did you worry me with all those questions?’

‘To know you, my dear. I had already agreed before I saw you with everything you have since said about the boy. I see I can trust you with anything — except yourself.’

‘Meaning?’

‘That you mustn’t think of paying my debts.’

‘I ought not to have said that.’ Sara flushed prettily as her uncle placed an affectionate hand on her shoulder.

‘As long as you don’t do it, you can say it. Remember, Sara, he’s not your sort. He hasn’t any family behind him. Everybody’s a snob for a daughter — you are that to me, Sara. No daughter could have done more. You must marry a man of cultivation, of taste, of family. The boy will be rich, of course; I can make him that; but don’t let these weeks of forced intimacy end seriously.’

Sara laughed, for the first time that day. ‘A new uncle,’ she said; ‘and I thought you knew only business.’

‘It’s all I do know,’ he admitted. ‘I’ve read, somewhere, about the death of chaperons. I don’t even know if you could properly take this very efficient young man with you.’

'They say chaperons are coming back,' was the dry answer, 'but I haven't seen any. Still, there are limits. To run about Touraine ——'

'With your cousin ——' A marked silence as they looked at each other.

'I don't want him to fall in love with me,' said this candid girl. 'You don't. Why, then, do you throw us together like that?'

Lord Llanthony smiled. 'When I was young,' he said, 'girls didn't even think these things.'

'And how do you know what girls thought?'

'I give in. Perhaps they did. Throwing you two together? Conditions, not I, have done that. To measure hours, or days, one more, one less, what does that count? This young man is good enough for anything but your husband. I have said that. The rest is with you. You will not lose your head. He might ——'

'I wish you would not put these ideas in my head,' Sara protested.

'That would be to wish me a woman,' Lord Llanthony answered. 'You must not expect feminine subtleties from me. The reason I want you two to go to Touraine is, of course, to give you both a change. Both of you have been under great strain. One, a stranger, must have every consideration we can show. He must have every advantage of his assumed position. That is only decent ——'

'Of course.'

‘See your aunt this afternoon. If she is as well as she was this morning, you can talk. Tell her what we propose. An ambulance motor as soon as she feels well enough; a home in Touraine; she loves that country. Can she spare you and Tybo for two days? Take the auto — I engaged it by wireless for a month; take the Archers ——’

Sara’s eyes glistened. ‘Have you met that lovely pair of monkeys?’

‘No. I’ve heard. We owe them much. Forget the sick-room. Get brightness in your mind and gaiety in your heart. A difficult time ahead, my dear; keep up your spirits. Keep his up. We have to steel our hearts.’ Lord Llanthony became deeply serious. ‘A month for him, for this honest boy, on whom we have no claim; and suppose he falls ill, or depression comes, and he says he can’t go on ——’

‘Never.’

‘Have you thought, Sara? Your aunt getting better; more and more talk from her; more reminiscences to which he must listen and assent; more endearments — and then one day he revolts; he can’t carry on this fraud on a helpless blind woman. She is well enough to be told, he says. Well, I should not like to have to deal that blow ——’

‘No — no.’

‘Or suppose he gets remorseful and loses heart and plays his part badly. Suspicion, questions, he confesses. Awful!’

‘He has never faltered.’

‘A long, dragging month, remember. Sara, keep him at top hole of health, energy, spirits. That too is your job. Touraine is a land of enchantments. Be its enchanted princess for him. Don’t act a cousin; be a cousin; be a sister.’

Sara clapped a silencer on laughter. ‘You are very, very clever, Uncle,’ she murmured.

He nodded pleased acceptance of this tribute. ‘You know,’ he went on confidently, ‘you can manage this inexperienced Western lad. It must be easy for the brilliant niece I have learned to know inside this last hour to be such a friend that a young man can’t and doesn’t think of love.’

‘Oh, yes, quite simple, Uncle.’ Sara glanced reflectively at the ceiling.

‘That’s settled, then,’ he said complacently. ‘One final problem. How can I stuff his pockets with money? He must live up to his position. The thought even of indirect advantage will be abhorrent to him.’

Sara impulsively kissed her uncle on the forehead. ‘You understand him, at any rate.’ A sly little accent rested on the pronoun. ‘I can’t help you there. He refused money from me and I know that he needs it.’

They discussed this at some length without seeing a clear way. Lord Llanthony looked at his watch. ‘A lot to do, Sara. I must be off. A passport for Tybo ——’

‘Yes, for Tybo.’ They sealed by a glance the compact; even when they were together alone the young man was Tybo.

‘Telegrams, some business letters; I shall wire to my London office for a secretary, and then I shall have more freedom.’

‘A secretary?’ Sara, intensely interested, asked for particulars. She was told that an expert was not necessary, that a typist was not required; somebody responsible, who could hear three words and dictate a long letter, who could file papers in a folder and details in his mind, who would be alert to spare his employer every possible worry about the little things.

‘But why not him?’ cried eager Sara. ‘For that, he could accept a salary.’

‘A fine solution,’ her uncle said, ‘and it need not take him much away.’ But he shook his head. ‘Our friend, Sara, our benefactor, how can I ask him to become a subordinate?’

‘Nonsense. You’re no tyrant.’

‘I should keep him busy.’

‘The busier you keep him, the more you can pay him,’ persuaded sententious Sara. She put her hand on her uncle’s shoulder. ‘This solves it,’ she said earnestly. ‘If he feels that he is earning money, he will accept it.’

‘The relation is too delicate, Sara. I cannot offer it. You go to the hospital now. Afterwards come to

the Archers' — not before six, remember. We'll fix up then for Touraine.'

They parted after an affectionate embrace with a mutual understanding which would have seemed impossible to either in the morning. As he went out of the door Sara called after him, 'Don't telegraph for that secretary till to-morrow.' He nodded acquiescence.

At the British Embassy the well-known name of the shipping magnate and international financier procured a prompt interview with a secretary. 'My son,' said Lord Llanthony, 'is adventurous. Sailing out of Deal in his small half-decked fishing boat, he was blown to the French coast. He lost mast and rudder and was wrecked near Dunkerque. He swam ashore, seems to have lain exhausted all night on the beach, gets breakfast at a fisherman's house, dries his clothes, walks to the town, changes some money, buys a ticket for Paris ——'

'How lucky,' said the sympathetic secretary. 'I wonder I didn't see anything in print.'

'He took care of that,' Lord Llanthony explained. 'He had promised his mother to curb his passion for the sea. He did not wish her to know. He had arranged to meet her in Paris in three days. She came ——'

'We read of the accident, Lord Llanthony. We sent to enquire. We were told of Lord Pontlottyn's presence, and that other relations were here; so we

did not intrude further. Is she making progress? I hope so.'

'Slowly, thank you; out of danger, we believe. The boy has no passport, of course.'

'Easily arranged.'

'Thank you. If you could give me a line to your passport branch ——'

'With pleasure.'

'The loss of the boat should be reported to the Board of Trade.'

'You forget; she was too small to require registration. You might as well report the loss of a rowboat on a canal.'

He left with the desired letter, which recited all the details which he had given, details which could never be proved false. In these days when a traveller is docketed and registered everywhere, nearly all untrue statements are subsequently detected. But one who arrives alone in a boat which no longer exists is reasonably safe.

The bearer of this letter owed part of his popularity to a rule that he should not think in a public place; hence, never absent-minded, he recognized people always and always responded to salutes. In this hour, however, his mind was so far away that he turned from the Faubourg Saint-Honoré completely blind to surroundings. He woke to a touch on the arm. A smiling Frenchman raised his hat, pointed to a policeman, and passed on. The policeman standing

in the middle of the Champs Élysées was violently blowing a whistle at him and waving him back. He had attempted to cross the broad avenue in the wrong place. He retreated, sat down on one of the many garden seats, and stared unseeing at the letter in his hand. A passport — to be used for a month; why not for life? That was the question that had put him in a daze. Did he want it that way? He thought so; else why this sudden sharp question that came from nowhere, why this inward agitation as he considered his answer? Could it be done? It seemed feasible, almost easy.

His son, the real Tybo, was dead. Only he knew that. Nobody else need ever know. He had found a substitute installed. Why disinherit this successor? Why not build anew on this foundation so firmly laid?

A woman came asking his ticket for the chair. He thrust a hundred-franc note into her hand. She made voluble protest; of course she had no change. He waved her away. She walked backward as from a mad king; then turned and ran, lest he regain a lucid moment.

Did he want it? Yes.

Could it be done? Yes.

He sprang to his feet, once more himself, and hailed a taxi.

He was eager as he had not been in years, eager to hear and see once more this boy who should be moulded to his desires.

CHAPTER VII

LORD LLANTHONY entered the home of the Archers with a passionate ardour under perfect control. His greeting instantly won an embarrassed boy. He listened to a good report from the hospital. Sara had come there. They had discussed Touraine in the sick-room. Lady Llanthony —

His lordship put a hand on the boy's shoulder. 'In that house in Touraine,' he said in a low voice, 'you will be surrounded by servants, by highly intelligent and sharply observant nurses. You will have to do more than act a part. You will have to live it. It will not be too hard for me if you can bring yourself to it. Can you say "Mother"?'

The boy lowered his head. 'I have not, yet — even to her — since the first day.'

'When you can, if you can; when you've chosen a course, or one has been forced on you, half measures mean failure. And what about Touraine?'

'She wants it, thinks it great. She will spare us both for the day.'

'Good! Sara for the French; you for the business end. I couldn't trust her with that.'

'I think,' said the boy with a little smile, 'that you don't know much about Sara.' ❧

'Ah! I see that she has been talking about me.'

That was right. In this remarkable position the more we know about each other, the better.'

'She spoke of the secretaryship.'

'Ah, did she? I was about to say that was almost breaking a confidence. I don't. I don't even think it. Give me a little time, my boy, to get used to this thing.'

'It's hard for you. It's weird — but I feel an intruder.'

'I know. And I'm a blunt man who strides through life, jostling and pushing, and offending susceptibilities, and I've been saying to myself all day that I shall hurt you or wound you. I ...'

'Cut that out,' the boy interrupted with a peremptory gesture. 'I've felt that hand on my head many times now — and I wouldn't keep it waiting for ten minutes; no, not if I had to fight you.' He jumped up from his chair and began to walk up and down, followed always by the watchful eyes of Lord Llanthony. 'My mother died when I was born,' he burst out. 'I was brought up by an aunt.' He stopped in front of the older man. 'I never knew until now what I missed. I get it under false pretences. I get what's meant for another. But I get it. You see, it isn't all one-sided. Don't you see that you can't wound me, can't hurt me? Unless you barred me from that hospital; then, I think, I should try and sneak in.' He resumed his seat, boy-like, a little embarrassed by his frank confession. 'You don't

need to think about me,' he continued more quietly. 'Rich men hate obligations. I've read that somewhere. But you needn't feel any. I haven't done anything for you. I didn't for Sara. That is, you see, it was just the way she told it. It's for your wife, blind, helpless. Of course, I couldn't sink myself forever. But for a month — what's that?'

'Tell me if I am right. You feel that you've got me in a trap ——'

The boy flushed, but did not dissent.

'You feel that I see that and must play up to you. You feel that when I'm out of the trap, I shall be grateful and want to prove it. My boy, when nations and men owe too much, they repudiate. I shall. You're going to end this thing not a dollar better off than you came into it. You're not going to be offered influence. Your path is not going to be smoothed. You'll have just one thing — my friendship and Sara's.'

'You've got it,' exclaimed the surprised and jubilant boy. 'Everything's right now.' He put out his hand and they exchanged a warm pressure.

'I don't like your cigarettes,' said his lordship. 'Try one of my cigars, Tybo.'

The boy laughed at the sudden companionable change of manner and voice, but shook his head. 'My money — what I have — is tied up in my own name. I've got to have some, of course. I could take it from you if I earned it. This secretaryship ——'

‘It means real work,’ said his lordship doubtfully.

‘If I can do it ——’

‘There’s little question of that. But business — well, it’s business. I couldn’t have a big affair muddled; but if you did muddle it; well, don’t you see I — well — I’ve no control over you.’

‘A secretary to you — a son to the world,’ the boy argued. ‘If the secretary makes a break, dismiss him; the son won’t say a word.’

‘Done! The man I should send for would expect a hundred pounds, say five hundred dollars a month, and a liberal expense account.’

‘But he wouldn’t live in the house.’

‘Pardon me, he would do just that. I have no cheap people about me. So that’s that ——’

Sara came, buoyant in reaction after lifted burdens. She could see that all had gone well between the two. With impetuous grace she caught the boy’s hand and stood with him before her uncle. ‘You’ve been splendid, Uncle,’ she said; ‘Tybo and I have had a long talk in the gardens of Salpêtrière. We think that you’re wonderful to understand everything and accept everything. We are immensely relieved — you can’t think what to-day has meant to us. We are just going ahead the best we can to do what you want us to do. I ——’ Sara’s voice thrilled with emotion that threatened to overwhelm her. Swiftly she changed her note. ‘If we’re off to buy castles, tell us what we must do.’

‘Go over there,’ her uncle laughed, ‘and talk it all out with Tybo. I’ve some thinking to do.’

He sat at one end of the long studio, apparently absorbed, watching through half-closed eyes the two eager talkers, so deeply interested in their pleasing task, so utterly unconscious that they had become within the hour king and queen on the watcher’s chess-board of life. The morning’s happenings, Lord Llanthony reflected, had fallen as though in preparation for the carrying-out of the newly conceived idea. He had not confessed the death of his son, lest the boy should decline to personate the dead; that vital fact could now be disclosed when the time was ripe. He had invented need for a secretary and now the boy had an adequate allowance, without feeling that he was being bribed or paid for posing as a son. He had warned Sara against love and marriage that she might begin to think about them; he had wished that this stranger who must know all the family secrets should be a member of the family. Now, the marriage was essential, for Sara must be the final shining lure that should lead a youth to sink himself for life in riches, luxury, and a peerage.

The watching, still observer saw that the boy confirmed all the impressions of the morning; a winning manner, good looks, a strong character; too strong, perhaps — but a good fault. He would want much managing, but Sara would help there. He was astonished afresh at her beauty, her vitality, her clever-

ness. The setting sun touched her red hair and framed the vivid face with fire. Of course the boy would fall in love with her. She must be made to respond. Sight of the two, eager, buoyant, refreshing to wearied and cynical age, quickened his pulse, re-invigorated his mind, restored his ambition, gave him an object at last to strive for, an object which really mattered.

This substitution must be made permanent. Sara and the boy must marry; an heir would almost surely come; the family could be established after all.

Brooding, thinking, he sat and watched. No obstacle that could not be surmounted; not one, that he could foresee. He had come to France to tell his wife that their son was dead. No last faint lingering hope to be extinguished now; no dead irrevocable past to mourn over; instead — the future, more alluring, with brighter promise, for the struggle which must precede success.

At dinner that night all the talk was of châteaux. The boy thought himself in fairyland. Lord Llanthony was a benevolent magician who granted every wish, Sara was a beautiful princess; he was dazed.

In the morning Lord Llanthony made final suggestions to Sara. 'Remember,' he said, 'a bold, an open policy about the boy's name and rank.'

'But when Tybo arrives?' Sara asked, surprised. She stopped pressing on her glove.

'In a countryside like Touraine, one brother

comes, another goes. Who knows or cares? You've decided on the train, you say?'

'Saves time, Uncle.'

He went to the telephone and reserved train seats for Lord Pontlottyn and party, talking the while.

'Our trouble, Sara, is until Tybo comes. After that, what matter? We must protect the sick-room. No rumours, no hints, no questions, must penetrate there. Nurses and doctors talk, remember.'

'I think you're right, Uncle,' Sara agreed, a little doubtfully. When her uncle clinched his argument by reminding her that the family could move elsewhere if necessary, that a new Tybo could appear with them in a new locality, she was entirely convinced.

'Defer to him, Sara. Let him have the lead always. That will give him nerve.'

'He hasn't seemed to lack it.' Sara smiled as she glanced at the clock.

'I wish' — Lord Llanthony frowned — 'that you were less attractive.'

'Shall I change?' She looked down demurely at her new dress.

'We owe so much to him' — this with a deep gravity. 'We are so entirely dependent on him. We must make everything smooth and easy for him — you and I; and yet ——' He put a hand on his niece's shoulder. 'Give him a good time to-day. Forget trouble. Leave care behind. Don't spare expense. Don't hesitate to buy a château if you can't rent it.'

If money must be spent on it buy, rather than rent. Never spend on another's property if you can help it. Tell him all this on the way down.'

'You are splendid, Uncle.'

'The position is the strangest that ever occurred, my dear. With your help, I can pull it through.'

And then the boy came, light-hearted, gay, with the laughter of the twins ringing in his ears. 'All ready?' he cried; 'of course Peter delayed us. We're a little late.'

Lord Llanthony crammed a solid wallet into the boy's pocket. 'My secretary,' he said, 'must be paymaster when he heads a party engaged on my business. Have a good time, you young people. Don't come back without a château. Don't haggle over a million francs. It sounds a lot, but it's only thirty thousand dollars.' He caught the boy's hand. 'Remember,' he suggested, as he fixed his eyes on the other, 'these young friends have done much for you and me. They are your guests and mine. They are accustomed to do things well. So is Sara. Dollars don't count. See that you don't count them.'

'It seems easy for me to be generous,' was the boy's laughing comment as he tapped the bulge in his coat raised by his new fat pocket-book.

Lord Llanthony watched them down the corridor, then went to the window. He saw the gay greeting of the Archer twins, witnessed their subtle homage to my Lord Pontlottyn as they stood up in the open

automobile and motioned his lordship to the seat of honour. He saw how laughing Sara fell into this amusing game. Under pretence of learning their parts, the three were sily teasing the boy; the secret watcher could almost know from their actions and their gestures what they were saying. He turned away from the window with an exultant thrill. How effectively these unsuspecting accomplices were furthering his project; for the inspiration of the night before had crystallized into a definite plan. When the time came — and it must come within a month — to disclose to the boy that the brilliant position was his for life, he must be prepared to receive the startling news. He must have drunk so deep of the pleasure of life that he could not take the cup from his lips. He must be steeped in luxury, intoxicated by power, drugged by love. Never had such resplendent bribe been offered to youth; Lord Llanthony smiled cynically; he knew what the answer must be.

He rejected every stuffed and luxurious seat in his gilded room and sent for a straight high-backed chair. He sat upright, his unwavering, brilliant eyes immovably fixed on the gilded arrow tip of a bronze Diana. His large muscular arms rested lightly on the sides of the chair and his fat firm hands hung down listlessly. He was one of the few capable of great concentration without corresponding muscular tension. His unwrinkled forehead, his round, solid cheeks, his lips not unduly pressed, were further proof of that

constitutional serenity which permitted immense mental labour without fatigue. He was believed by some financiers to talk much and wide of the point; but others knew from experience that at the end of a long sitting he won victories over tired men.

Lord Llanthony was not utterly unscrupulous. If he had been that, he would, with his daring, have been in prison; instead, he was more than a millionaire in pounds sterling. As with most self-made men, his standards of conduct had improved with his wealth. He would not now sail as close to the wind as he had sailed in the beginning of his spectacular career. This was not because he had no longer need to set his helm hard up against law or public conscience. It was a genuine advance in moral standards, the unconscious result of environment; but these standards permitted him to reason thus.

This fraud on the British constitution, on the sacred institution of the peerage, on the people of England, injures nobody. It is a benefit. It brings fresh blood, good character, and healthy life into the House of Lords. It bars a bilious Welsh youth, republican in sentiment, who has openly declared that he would never sit in the Lords if the title should fall to him. Should the law force an unwilling title on a fanatic who wishes to wipe out a system of which he, by the accident of birth, is a member? Does a king, a premier, or a president make an executive of a man who wishes to destroy the interests that he is ap-

pointed to protect? It is absurd, then, to see more than technical violation of law in this substitution of sons.

There is no violation of the rights of Ellis Evans. Lord Llanthony smiled grimly as he paused on this thought. The young man would be spared the painful duty of receiving what he did not want. This was a kindness. If this surly son of a cross-grained father meant what he said, he ought to be grateful. If he did not, he would pay the just penalty of being taken at his word. He should be left some money, but he could never know that it was solid compensation for a stolen peerage. He could never know that if he had been heir, he would have been left a princely sum. Without a grimace, Lord Llanthony, on the voyage to Cherbourg, had prepared notes for a new will. The death of his son, the certainty that Ellis Evans was irrevocable heir to the title, compelled him to provide for its adequate support. His scarlet and ermine robes must not, at his death, be trailed in the dust of poverty. However he might detest this prophet who wrote of tabernacles and snuffed-out candles, he must make him and his son rich. No human being, legally entitled, may refuse an inherited peerage; he may ignore it, fly from it, but it pursues him and his eldest born. Somebody, sometime, would accept its duties and responsibilities, and so money must be left.

At this point, Lord Llanthony moved for the first time in an hour. He drew from his pocket the notes of

the will, but he paused ere he lighted a match. He went over item by item once again, the results to be achieved by success in his daring project.

What happiness, what peace, for his wife, continuous, assured for her life. She had said that she was glad of the accident. It had brought her son to her, sane, healed, loving. If sight should come back, and that was just possible, she must be told, of course. Perhaps love for the boy, hope, ambition for the family, would lead to acquiescence. If not, the boy could go and no harm done.

What profound lasting satisfaction for him, Lord Llanthony, to found a family on a deliberate creation of his will. His energy, his daring, his ability, should surmount law and defeat nature. Denied an heir, he would manufacture one. He glowed with a fresh energy as he reflected on so novel and difficult an outlet for his incessantly active spirit. His pursuits had become empty. Utterly weary of making money, of controlling men, of developing railways, of managing ships, of speculation, he had searched imagination in vain for an object for which he cared. Deer forests, yachting, a private zoölogical garden, an endowed theatre, a model city, a road along the Andes: these and a thousand other aims had been rejected. Now, at his doorstep, without thought of his, was deposited an idea fantastic and attractive, promising fulfilment of many ardent desires, demanding boldness, foresight, constant supervision.

He lighted the notes of the will and ground the ashes beneath his heel. There was unnecessary vigour in this symbolic action, which definitely signalled that the bold conception had sprung into action. He had burned more than a paper; he had burned his boats.

He lighted a cigar now and relaxed his mind, considering indirect results. He saw humour in this founding a family on a changeling and an element of the fairy tale. What continuing sly amusement in watching an obsequious world doing homage to this penniless American boy, strutting the stage magnificently beneath a shower of gold; what a comedy, life-long, without tiresome interludes. What a ridiculous retort to an embittered brother and an envenomed nephew. The absurd fanatic who had written of dark tabernacles would find a fresh candle lighted, not held high by a son who pretended to despise the inheritance, not grasped by the legitimate heir, but flaunted by an unsuspected interloper — an acolyte not entitled by the accident of birth, but appointed and supported by illegal, daring human agency. Here was matter, indeed, for sardonic laughter.

His lordship did almost laugh as he thought of that meeting with the bridal couple. If he had been managing this thing from the beginning, he could not have arranged this detail with such perfection. Only a surgical operation could dislodge from the brains of the Evanses the conviction that they had met the heir. The Finlays, too, perfect! An amazing begin-

ning; and now the boy had been sent away with fantastic powers, to buy not only châteaux in France but also castles in Spain, castles that should loom so fair and bright that never could they be surrendered, castles in the air that should be made real. The first taste of what wealth could do; Lord Llanthony pictured that arrival at the railway station. The obsequious conductor, the reserved seats, the special courtesies to 'milor,' the simple boy pretending that he was used to all this, inwardly exulting that he could handsomely return the kindnesses of the Archers and cut a distinguished figure in front of Sara; lordly tips, of course; Lord Llanthony could see these handed over with an air.

He smiled and rang for his valet. 'Déjeuner, please, a brioche and a demi-Évian.'

He ate the bun and drank the mineral water with a high new pleasure. He owed much to his capacity to see inside the other man. He had read minds and responded to feelings much more intricate and involved than those of this ingenuous youth.

CHAPTER VIII

TYBO, entering the train, had his first vision of what money meant when it meant nothing; also of what an English lord meant to officials. Their attitude is in part an inheritance of the time when great lords made the grand tour in their own great coaches of state, brought across the British Channel and supported and flanked by retainers. These rich lords drove through a poor country, showering equally arrogance and gold. Though these state progresses are forgotten, the tradition lingers; 'milor' is still something superhuman. If this theory be not correct, why will a conductor displace a rich American for a lord whose tip may well be less? Anyhow, Tybo drank for the first time the heady cup of an extreme deference. He had to accept it; he had his part to play; and there was no time for inward revolt against grey heads bowed too low and toil-worn bodies bent too much. Natural good taste kept him from overdoing it. There was no patronage in his handing out of pour-boires, which his ignorance of proper amounts and of the value of the franc made more than lavish. The one thought deep in his mind, the factor that Lord Llanthony had overlooked, was the judgment of three friends, friends who helped and loyally supported him, but who knew him to be strutting in borrowed honors.

Their hidden amusement must be accepted. He did not mind that. But what if any act of his should provoke inward criticism or derision? This powerful and continuous antidote to Lord Llanthony's poison had been overlooked by the latter. He had forgotten the intense sensitiveness of youth, its fear of ridicule. Tybo did not reason all this out. What he hoped was that the Archers would think him all right and that Sara would approve his actions.

In the train, Frank Archer remarked that between Blois and Angers more mediæval history was preserved in castles and ruins than in any equal distance in the world. He spoke of the beauty of Azay-le-Rideau, of the sinister associations of Amboise and Loches, the oubliettes, the dark dungeons, the torture chambers, the cage for a cardinal who could not lie or sit.

'Whatever you do, Tybo,' Peter cried, laughing, 'don't take either of those. Buy Azay-le-Rideau.'

There was one Frenchman in the carriage, an elderly man of great dignity of manner, who had given no sign that he understood English. White with indignation, he flung down his paper. 'Insolent!' he cried; 'would you go to make the merchandises of a national monument of a people cultured before your parvenu country had been discovered?'

'Pardon,' Sara quickly apologized in her perfect French. 'It is a little jest which we make at home. If one admires the capitol at Washington, perhaps one

says he will buy it. It is a silly joke, monsieur, and has no meaning of offense.'

The Frenchman rose, lifted his hat, and stepped out into the corridor. As he could find no other seat, the sight of his stiff back was a rebuke to frivolity.

'Monsieur,' Sara called out, 'you martyrize yourself because two peoples have the different ideas of the humour. Nothing offensive was thought or meant.'

Sara's charming face and winning manner brought a smile, which widened as monsieur glanced at the downcast lids of the culprit. 'You are very gentille, mademoiselle.' He resumed his seat. 'Explain me this American humour which goes with jest to remark that it would buy this that it admires.'

Sara tried; Peter tried, they were soon in gales of laughter at the puzzled solemnity of the Frenchman's face. When they finally abandoned the hopeless task, a pleasant relationship had been established. Monsieur gave his name and expressed the hope that 'this gay-hearted quartette' would visit his château.

'But, Monsieur Despradailles, I have been to the Château Malabry,' Sara cried. 'I remember well the tapestries and the coffres, and the Cordovan leather room. You have truly a beautiful home.'

He was pleased. 'A home — no. I am driven out, mademoiselle. I inherited the beautiful things and I have added all my life. Now the tourists come, hundreds in a day, and my château is a museum. No, no, I am expelled.'

'You are very generous, monsieur,' said Tybo.

'Non! I do not like. But if you have antiquities and the objects of art, it owes to the connoisseurs that they should see, and these are of a great number. French and of the foreign countries; and then the others, they read and they hear, and then it is a flood. All Touraine by the Loire is a great museum and one cannot churlishly make shut the door.' He smiled. 'There is a little house,' he continued, 'hidden in the trees. It is of the simplest. When I come from Paris, I live there. In the late afternoon, when the doors are shut and the crowds are gone, I rob through trees — no, how do you say? I steal through the trees and have the long contemplation of my treasures. You have seen, mademoiselle. If the others like, I am very pleased.'

Sara explained their pressing errand. The stupefied man looked from one to the other. 'The children' — he exploded — 'pardon me, but I am old — to buy, to rent a château! Ah, this is your humour American, again. Is it that I ought to laugh?' He had great shaggy eyebrows and they met in a tragedy frown.

Sara told of the accident and introduced her companions.

'My cousin, Lord Pontlottyn,' she said, 'will tell you for what he searches.'

Tybo, carefully avoiding American slang, explained his needs. 'Can you suggest anything?' he asked.

A possibility was mentioned. *Le Château des*

Baumes must be sold. Monsieur La Porte, its owner, had met great losses and accepted an appointment in the Colonial Department at Saigon, in Cochin-China. The animated description given by the Frenchman charmed the listeners. He ended by offering to take them there. He wished to see the face of his friend when these apparent butterflies clustered about, to be suddenly revealed as serious people of business with money in their pockets and brains in their heads.

‘I hope he has not gone,’ said Monsieur Despradailles; ‘he will have satisfaction in so quick a sale as you speak about, but such celerity is not possible. It is not to be thought about.’

‘If he collects the jits,’ said Tybo earnestly, ‘why can’t he hand over?’

Sara translated without a smile.

‘All is possible, perhaps,’ the Frenchman said, lifting his eyebrows.

At the Tours station, they found his automobile waiting; but also there was the baggage of Monsieur La Porte. No one knew whether the owner was taking the next train, or the one after. ‘If we meet him, couldn’t we flag him?’ Tybo asked.

This time it was Peter who translated.

Monsieur Despradailles heaved his shoulders and nodded. He found an intense secret amusement in the extraordinary methods of these mad youngsters.

They drove along the north bank of the Loire, getting a whirling impression of towers, mediæval walls,

exquisite steep sloping gardens, stately cedars, ornate chalets, and mansarde roofs.

'Monsieur La Porte,' their host said, 'is a bon compagnon — a good chap, you say — and we are friends, him and I — but I laugh when I think to pause him in the road — mais, why not? With a grand pleasure I look on the face of my friend when he will come to hear that he rent or sell his château between here and the station. Ah! Ah!' He stood up in the open automobile and waved frantically.

'Milor,' he said, opening the door and waving precedence.

'With your permission, monsieur, may mademoiselle accompany us?'

'Mais certainement. It ought that we have an interpreter charming.'

Monsieur La Porte accepted the invasion with a vivid surprise and answered the hasty introductions by an invitation to get in his car. He was taking the next train and time was limited. He was a fair-haired Tourangeau, with a skin like a ripe apricot, and a spiked moustache. He addressed a polite phrase to 'Milor' which his friend translated, and he listened absorbed to the latter's exclamatory explanation. He cried 'Comment!' three times, shrugged his shoulders four times, glanced from one to the other of the would-be buyers, and then broke out as follows: 'I must sell. I am forced to sell. But to merchants of pork, assassins of the franc, I sell not. And to brigands across the

Sleeve, the brigands of Britain, I sell not equally. At the price double, yes. I am forced. Kick not my shin, mon vieux. They do not read my face.' He smiled pleasantly at Sara, who was looking pensively out over the Loire. 'To a compatriot, yes, for a million — to the others, double. Tell them to go to Gaudin.'

'I am very sorry, mademoiselle,' said Monsieur in English, 'but if I confess now that you have the French, it is due to follow that he will decline to negotiate at all — and your need is serious.'

'That is certain, monsieur. That is why I am silent.'

'You have the wise head, mademoiselle, but I, I am distressed that I place you with such awkwardness.'

Sara smiled and warned Tybo by a touch on the arm.

'My friend,' Monsieur La Porte cried, 'for all cash, no mortgage, I would, yes, I would accept eight hundred thousand francs. This girl is very charming, Despradailles. You understand, mon vieux. When I speak of enemies who would rob us, I do not mean anything personal of your young friends. Her hair is of a tint distinguée.'

'We will see Gaudin.' This interruption was volcanic in its intensity.

The gallant gentleman with the apricot face withdrew unwilling eyes from Sara's face. Giving his moustache one more swift turn, he said that if he could get the whole of the money by noon the next day

he would accept seven hundred and fifty thousand. He looked at Sara. His friend knew that his financial troubles were the result of just that habit; a pretty face always drew him from business. He opened his lips to speak.

'We will leave you now, my friend,' Monsieur Despradailles said hastily. 'I will give them your Paris address.'

They parted with elaborate ceremonial. Monsieur turned and waved a hand from his auto.

'Ma foi!' muttered Monsieur Despradailles as he stood by the roadside, 'every time he looked at her he took off a hundred thousand.' He turned, distressed; 'A thousand pardons, mademoiselle. It was a situation very delicate. He is choleric and the ridicule turns him over and over. If he knew that you had understanding of his utterances farouche — finished, yes, of a verity; the affair would have been closed before it was opened.'

'Do not be troubled, monsieur, I beg of you. I thank you that you kept silence. A château — that is our need. Nothing else counts.'

'I breathe again, mademoiselle. You are of a spirit fine and delicate.'

Then his auto, which had followed, picked them up.

The outside of the country house was enthusiastically acclaimed. It had the solidity, the towers, the turrets, of a castle, with the charm of a dwelling. It was approached by terraced walls, covered with

peach and pear trees trained en espalier with such care that the place of each twig seemed to have been settled before the tree was planted. A terrace of vegetables — artificial, hand-painted, Peter declared; flowers at the top terrace luxuriantly blooming; a sward of green grass; a grand cedar of Lebanon; a beetling portal, made gay and lively by fantastic carving, a door wide open. They entered a great sunny salon.

Tybo, who knew as much about buying a house as about playing the bassoon, had been rehearsed the night before. 'Peter,' he said, 'would you crack your wise eye on the water supply. Frank, report on the drainage. I'll see if the soil is gravel. Sara, explore the rooms. You have ten minutes to report.'

The Frenchman turned and saw that Gaudin, the well-known real estate agent of the district, had entered the room. He explained the meaning of the invasion. 'And am I then to treat with "*une volée de blancs becs*"?' demanded the latter indignantly.

'This mob of white-beaks (of irresponsible youngsters),' said Monsieur Despradailles with reproachful dignity, 'will buy the house to-day and probably move in to-morrow.'

'So does the arrogant wealth of the foreigner deride our customs,' shrieked the small, precise man. 'It is a matter of two months.'

'They will make it two hours.' The agent shuddered. 'My good Gaudin, the proprietor has grand

necessity for money. You have orders to rent or sell. Have a care that the good American gold is not rejected.'

Tybo, outside, heard his name. Sara leaning over an ornate balustrade, beaming down on him, her red hair a sun-lighted aureole, struck him for the first time as a figure of romance. He had mediæval visions as he went to her summons. The background of the massive château encouraged this fleeting thought of armoured knights and beautiful ladies waving from balconies. He found her in enthusiastic mood.

'These sunlit rooms will do for Auntie,' she cried; 'the rest does not much matter. Look at the view.' They became practical. A lot of changes, improvements, additions must be made in the matter of bathrooms, heating apparatus, and so on. That meant purchase.

'Can't be done,' said Tybo, who had been thinking hard.

'And why, pray?' asked Sara, straightening at the positive tone. She forgot the deference due to a lord.

'Despradailles; he will introduce us to others. He and his friends understand things. When Tybo comes ——'

'Well?'

'Just what you said in the train — you'll all have to go somewhere else.'

'Well?'

'Can't you get it?' He was surprised. 'Landed

with a house, and have to skip out before the ink is dry on the deeds.'

'This suite will just do for Auntie. It's perfect. Changes here can be finished in a week.'

'Right. So we'll rent, for the shortest time we can and make those changes.'

'A lot you know about French law and pulling other people's houses to pieces,' Sara retorted. 'Can't you understand Lord Llanthony? He does everything better than anybody else. He'll make the inside of this house absolutely modern, without spoiling its beauty, and if he has to move and wants to sell, he'll make a profit. Oh, you leave it to him. Now will you buy?'

'You talk as if I were really Tybo.'

Sara glanced about, then stamped her foot, glaring. She laughed. 'I forgot too.' She swept a curtsy. 'My lord,' she begged humbly, 'please buy. The place was made for us. The price is two million francs, payable in Paris at noon to-morrow.'

'I'll put it up to Lord Llanthony.'

Sara flung herself down on a Louis Fifteenth canapé, all twisted curves and old rose brocade. 'You are annoying!' she exclaimed. 'When Uncle gives carte blanche, he wants no details. He left decisions to you.'

'Sara, I've never spent a dollar without thinking twice. Can I learn in an hour to spend thousands?'

'Forgive me, Tybo.' Her smile was winning, her

manner appealing. 'Of course. Well, the price of this place is just about a dollar to uncle. He thinks in millions.'

'All right, I'll make an offer. Of course, I can get it cheaper.'

Impetuous Sara jumped up. 'That is the price,' she snapped; but quickly she resumed her part. 'Oh, Tybo, don't haggle. You forget Monsieur La Porte thought I didn't know French.'

'And was that his lowest price?' Tybo persisted.

'It is the only price,' she evaded.

He came over and faced her. 'If it was my money — all right, your word would go.' His manner was very grave. 'It's another's and I've got to do the best for him I can. Buying real estate is warfare. You learn where you can, what you can, and you act accordingly.'

'It is a matter of honour.' Sara drew herself up. 'What you are not meant to hear, you do not hear.'

'What you want to hear, you ask about. Tell me, Sara, what did he say?'

She flushed. He saw the red surge over her fair skin. They looked mutual defiance; neither drooped an eyelid. She told him, at first in angry spurts, then more quietly. 'You see,' she said in the end, 'his friend was loyal to us and did not stop him. Shall Monsieur Despradailles have to remember always that his kindness to strangers cost his neighbour a lot of money?'

‘I see that we are being rushed because we’re foreigners. No sense in that, Sara. I’ll offer a million — his own price.’

It was on the tip of Sara’s tongue, but she strangled it. ‘Small piker,’ was her thought.

‘Please be fair, Sara. If old spiked moustache hadn’t said so many mouthfuls, if you hadn’t heard anything at all, do you think I’d fall for the first price named? Must I throw away somebody else’s money because you understand French? Gee, this scares me, quarrelling with you.’

‘Oh, no, not quarrelling, Tybo.’ She was friendly again. ‘I suppose we’ll have to do it. We’ll have to leave it to Uncle. Do you mind that?’

‘Fine. I won’t name a price. Come. Let’s face this Monsieur Gaudin.’

So the first little skirmish ended in a draw.

‘Was furniture included?’ asked Tybo as they paused to glance about the lovely room, somewhat overcrowded with charming furniture.

‘I don’t know,’ Sara admitted.

‘I’d like to see one straight line,’ he confessed, as he peered at chair legs.

‘Everything’s crooked in France but the people,’ was Sara’s comment as they went down the great curved stairway.

The Frenchmen rose as they entered the salon. These two watched in astonished silence the sudden appearance of the twins who marched solemnly side

by side and simultaneously saluted Tybo. 'My lord,' Frank reported, 'the drainage is modern.'

'My lord,' said Peter, 'there is plenty of good water.'

Not a hint of burlesque; they stopped just short of that; and the agent conceived a deep respect for this youthful lord so deferentially approached.

'Monsieur Despradailles,' Tybo said, 'will you please say to Monsieur Gaudin that the outfit is O.K. and the deal is on.'

Silence; a puzzled Frenchman. Sara bit her lips that no words should burst through. This was Tybo's business, this negotiation. He must not be let down.

'Pardon, milor,' said Monsieur Despradailles, 'you speak, I think, the technical phrases of the affairs.'

Tybo pulled himself together and studied each word. 'I am sorry, monsieur; we shall report in favour of purchase. Lord Llanthony will buy.'

'Lord Llanthony?'

'Son père,' murmured Sara, breaking her resolve.

'Sapristi,' muttered the Frenchman, 'there is an adult in this affair after all.' He turned and translated to the agent, who bowed with dignity. His answer conveyed to Tybo, was to the effect that milor's notary was welcome to investigate titles, check inventories, and discuss details; that under great pressure, no doubt the matter could be closed within sixty days.

'Please tell him,' Tybo answered, 'that I shall pay

to-morrow at noon. I shall take possession at one o'clock and workmen will begin at two.'

The imperturbable interpreter conveyed this devastating message. The recipient exploded. He raved, he gesticulated, he ran hither and thither, his white spats twinkling as they crossed sun patches. Such haste was disrespectful to the property, to the vendor, to him; these people did not know what they were buying. Spoon by spoon, the inventory must be checked. That alone would require weeks. Such mad people must be looked after. The stranger, for the honour of France, must be protected. His anguished utterances were gravely delivered to the unmoved buyer.

'Please ask him the price,' said Tybo.

The answer was shrieked.

Monsieur Despradailles hesitated perceptibly before translating. He did not glance at Sara as finally he said: 'Four million francs.'

Tybo said truthfully that he was surprised. He was quite sure that Lord Llanthony would pay no such extravagant figure. No such price would be placed before him.

Translated to Monsieur Gaudin, he went into violent hysterics as he expressed his suffering at the word 'extravagant.' The whole incident had greatly unnerved him and this unworthy disposition to haggle was the crowning injury. But at the end of his paroxysm, he cut off a million. That concession,

calmly refused by his imperturbable lordship, brought an uncomplimentary reference to foreigners.

‘Monsieur Gaudin,’ said Monsieur Despradailles, with calm authority, ‘cease now these reproaches. If you will condescend to cut off another million ——’

In the end this was done. His lordship expressed a doubt that such a sum would be paid, but agreed to submit it.

‘It will be paid, monsieur,’ Sara murmured.

Monsieur Despradailles turned, lifted Sara’s hand and imprinted a kiss on it. ‘Mademoiselle,’ he said in a low voice, ‘you are very gentille.’ He listened with surprise as this hustling lord announced an immediate return to Paris.

‘We can catch a much earlier train than we thought,’ Tybo said to Sara, ‘and so get in an afternoon visit to the hospital.’

They picked up a basket of luncheon at Tours and were in Paris by five o’clock, secretly proud of the day’s record.

‘My lord,’ Peter said solemnly as they parted at the station, ‘please buy more trifles and ask us to come along. This is great fun.’

‘And what time to-night,’ asked Archer, ‘will your lordship condescend to come home?’ He drew Tybo aside. ‘You’re magnificent,’ he encouraged. ‘If you could only speak English, you’d be perfect.’

‘I’m getting the low-down on the language as fast

as I can,' Tybo answered. 'I'll rate high with dictionary makers inside two weeks, if I don't get woozy with the strain.'

'A fine beginning,' Archer congratulated with a grin. 'I just wanted to say — well, it's not an easy job you've got — and Peter and I think you're fine at it and we — we're there, every time you want us ——'

Tybo, touched at the genuine feeling shown, let go of himself for ten seconds. 'A crook,' he confided earnestly, 'gets his before the judge sends him to it. To be pretending all the time — that's hard labour, all right!'

'We understand, old son; we're with you.'

This encouragement meant a lot to the boy. So did Sara's as they drove to Salpêtrière.

'Lie back and rest,' she said with kindly sympathy. 'Please let me tell you — you've been simply splendid.'

'Sara? Do you mean it?'

'Every word.'

'Will you tell me when I make breaks?'

'I promise.'

'Sara,' he exploded, 'for an hour in that château, I forgot — forgot I was acting. I woke up, asking myself which was real, which was me.'

'And I don't wonder at that,' she said, smiling. 'How much easier for you. Live it, Tybo. Live the part and don't remember real things till the real Tybo comes.'

'It's a long way from the Loire to the Ohio River,' he murmured.

'Far enough away to forget just for one month.'

He nodded, dreaming, unconsciously revolting against sinking himself even for one month; yet Sara was right. So much easier to drug memory and forget reality, to pretend so hard that pretending almost ceased; thus did unwitting Sara innocently conspire with Lord Llanthony in making a parasite of a hardy youth.

They found Lady Llanthony well enough to express a high pleasure at this unexpected visit and to listen with a happy smile to their animated description of the new home. Her chief delight, however, was obviously in the energy and business capacity of her son. She did not care — that was abundantly clear — where she was taken, or what should happen to her — she had a son of whom she could be proud; that was enough. The boy — well, he loved this woman whom he had coaxed back to life. At moments, as they talked, he forgot, Sara forgot; there was no constraint. But the two were silent as they drove to the hotel.

'Uncle's windows are somewhere along there,' Sara said. 'I'll signal. He might have visitors who know Tybo.'

He sat in the taxi, watching, and presently she appeared, beckoning. For the second time that day he had a romantic vision of a girl with an aureole summoning him to her aid.

‘Congratulations, my boy,’ Lord Llanthony cried, as he entered the room. ‘Sara tells of a wonderful success. Dinner here in an hour — but I can’t spare you to go to the Archers’ and change. Here, I have it.’

He summoned his valet. ‘Measure Lord Pontlot-tyn,’ he commanded. ‘Go and buy some things.’ He had a private word with François, who went away in a hurry.

‘We’ll excuse evening dress to-night, Tybo,’ he said; ‘we’ll look after that to-morrow.’ He smiled and patted the boy’s shoulder. ‘You mustn’t mind. You must dress up to your position. When the end comes — well, François will benefit if you want to be foolishly independent. Come, make free use of my room.’ He went himself and turned on the water in the bath. So natural, so kindly, was his manner in performing little services that he achieved just what he wished, an intimacy which was that of father and son. ‘If François hasn’t returned when you’re out of the bath,’ he said, ‘don’t wait for him to shave you. There’s everything you need.’

Tybo bathed, grinning. ‘Don’t wait,’ he thought. ‘But I will wait. Does he think I’m going to shave myself?’ Nevertheless he did — amused by this life of luxury; ‘a valet to shave me,’ he muttered. ‘Oh, f’heaven’s sake.’

When François came, softly tapping, with the news that ‘milor’s investments’ were ready, the

startled boy saw heaps of shining silk garments — shirts, underclothing, socks. He could not help it; Lord Llanthony had truly spoken; he must dress up to his position. He emerged ultimately swathed in soft things which gave him a luxurious sense of physical pleasure. He protested. Lord Llanthony asked indifferently what mattered an undershirt or two; the valet had misunderstood, no doubt, perhaps had got a commission, had bought a dozen when one was wanted.

Sara came, shimmering in soft green, glancing eagerly, seeing that Tybo's report of the day was approved. She was proud of that swift day and of their good luck and she bubbled with enthusiasm. Tybo had not heartily agreed that he must dress up to his position, but he saw now that he must live up to Sara. If she was like this every night, he must have evening clothes; and his brains too, they must be brushed up to keep pace with her. As they ate, she put her case about the price with such good humour and point that he was forced to fight hard. Lord Llanthony listened with genuine amusement, told them he had had many arbitrations, but none before in which both sides were absolutely right. As Monsieur Despradailles had been so kind and was to be a useful and important neighbour, the obvious course was to pay the two million francs. The decision differed from that of all other arbitrations in that it pleased everybody. His lordship showed an amused interest in the

Archers and asked several questions about them. Their silence was vital to his plans; he did not wish to trust to friendship; he mildly expressed curiosity about their income, their investments. He wished unobtrusively to show his appreciation of their kindness, he said. Perhaps he could do them a good turn. This gratitude appealed to Tybo; when the chance came he would pass the word to the twins. So did he innocently promise to help Lord Llanthony in getting a money hold on two careless young people who might, if need arose, be starved into holding their tongues.

‘I forgot,’ said his lordship, ‘a telegram came for Lord Pontlottyn. I feared it might have been sent from the hospital. I opened it. I hope you won’t mind.’ He handed over a telegram from Jennifer Evans asking about the progress of her aunt. ‘I answered it in my own name. Kind of her, isn’t it? We might have her at the château, one day; what do you say, Sara?’

She looked up, puzzled.

‘There’s no complication there,’ her uncle said, smiling. ‘Don’t you see that, when the real Tybo comes, we can tell her the whole story. She may laugh, or she may not, what matter?’

‘She’s not exactly our sort, Uncle.’

‘Oh, I understand that; but she may bring a better family feeling all round.’

‘That’s awfully sweet of you, Uncle, after the way they’ve behaved.’ She smiled and glanced at the boy.

‘Do you think she’d ever forgive, Uncle? She flirted desperately with Tybo. She will feel that she has been made ridiculous.’

‘Ah, flirted, did she? How would you like to help to entertain her at the château, Tybo?’ A waiter entered and masks were clapped on.

Lord Llanthony, answering the telegram in his own name, had thus identified himself with the heir of his creation. ‘Tybo has told me of your kind interest,’ he had wired, ‘and he and I much appreciate it. We are quietly settling in the country and we hope that you and your husband will visit us. Lady Llanthony improves every day and we hope can soon leave the hospital.’

Lord Llanthony thus picked up every stone that rolled along and set it with mortar in the tower which he was building. This tower must be so firm that when the time came to show it to the boy, he must perceive that it could not be overthrown except by himself. His lordship was amused at that thought; his observant eyes had noted the young man’s fingers gently rubbing down his arm, in unconscious enjoyment of the feeling of the silk against the skin. ‘He laps up luxury’ was his lordship’s thought. He produced a gold cigarette case with the coffee. ‘The crest of the Llanthony’s,’ he said, ‘a propeller, you see. I forced this unusual design on the college of heralds when I received the title. Please carry it. You must have these trifles.’

Yes, these trifles were necessary in this new life; the boy put the case in his pocket. He offered to render accounts and wished to hand over his thick roll of francs hardly depleted. 'My dear boy!' his lordship cried; 'spare me that. You are my secretary. It's your business. Keep as many accounts as you like and, when the play is over and the curtain rings down, hand me what you wish.'

Yes, the boy supposed he must have money in his pocket. He replaced the bursting wallet.

Lord Llanthony pleaded letters to write and went into the next room. He stood back in the darkness watching the two as they discussed with a high animation the changes at the château. If this was the real Tybo, his son, this clean, eager boy — but he pushed away the thought; depression was not allowed in his life. He wished now that the boy should marry the Archer girl. Could he bring that about? Such a union would ensure the silence of the twins; and Sara — a member of the family — could not speak. He knew his limitations; still, he could do something. When he reappeared after an hour, he suggested that fast work would perhaps need a division of labor, that Sara might attend to purchases in Paris while Tybo pushed on the Touraine changes. The language need not be a difficulty; an interpreter, better still, one of the Archers. Were they both serious in their art; or was it only the boy who thought himself a painter?

'Frank,' Tybo answered, 'grudges every hour of daylight. Peter looks after him.'

'Well, arrange it if you can. Perhaps she would help you out. If not, engage somebody. What do you think, Sara?'

'I think Peter would make a fine interpreter.' Her recommendation sounded quite cordial.

'Give me the whole of to-morrow morning, Tybo. I'll send the auto for you at half-past nine. We'll complete the purchase and then you two can go ahead.'

When Tybo left that night he took a taxi. It seemed to suit better, and besides a fellow with a stuffed pocket-book and gold knickknacks ought to be careful.

The purchase of the Château des Baumes was the subject of animated discussion at some supper-tables that night on the Loire.

Tours, with its history of two thousand years, its violent scenes of the Middle Ages, its mad conflicts between the fiery Angevins in the west and hosts of feudal lords and kings to the east, its active bustle when the American armies made headquarters there, its daily flood of tourists, still has its peaceful self-centred homes, nestling beneath its cathedral towers and the grandiose tomb of its fifth-century bishop, Saint Martin. In some of these homes the story was told of the onslaught of four school-children who bought a château in an automobile before they had seen it, made a subsequent five-minute inspection,

and then ran back to Paris as indifferently as though they had purchased picture postal cards. Surprise was expressed that that grand seigneur, Monsieur Despradailles, had personally intervened in the negotiations. Why a man who left his business affairs to agents should deign to mix in such a matter for others was not to be understood. There was much comment on the insolence of American wealth. As French newspapers had convinced all but experts that the fall of the franc was due entirely to English and American machinations, it was concluded that this purchase was the beginning of concerted action for buying depreciated properties. It was this dramatic incident, exaggerated and distorted by rumour, that gave birth to the idea that foreigners should be precluded from owning real estate. People seriously began to talk of a France whose soil had been secretly bought up by aliens for insidious but unexplained purposes. It did not matter that real estate had gone up as the franc had gone down; that the proprietor's special top price had been paid without a protest: that special price was just, was proper. Everybody knew that Paris had two prices for all articles sold; it was reasonable that real estate should follow the same rule. The story of the American in Paris who had refused to pay twelve hundred francs for an ivory bracelet, and had subsequently got it for one hundred francs through a French friend, was recited with angry criticism of the foreigner and bitter comment on the traitorous

Frenchman. Eleven hundred per cent difference was approved and commended as a patriotic effort on the shopkeeper's part to inflict a wound on the fat purse of one of the nation of Shylocks. A doctor, it was said, charges fees according to the wealth of the patient; why not the shopkeeper?

The happy substitution of this new principle of political economy for the law of supply and demand, of reasonable profits, had, in the end, its inevitable result. People forgot that, while a man must go to a doctor, he could refrain from purchasing a curio, an antique, or a diamond bracelet. Thousands the next year left Paris without buying anything. Vague about values, indisposed to haggle, they flattened their noses against plate-glass windows, but never opened the door. They did not mind being done — that was the inevitable penalty of ignorance of a language; but to be done outrageously, shamelessly, from patriotic motives, seemed unreasonable.

CHAPTER IX

JENNIFER EVANS, shopping in her home town, mentally added one fourth to the grocer's bill. Having done the same thing several times already, she had the price of a telegram; so she turned from the general counter to the wired-in corner and asked for a foreign blank. The grocer's daughter complied, hiding surprise; but could not conceal astonishment when she read the address: Lord Pontlottyn, Paris. 'We are very anxious,' Jennifer explained; 'my husband's aunt, Lady Llanthony, was badly hurt when we were visiting her. The taxi-men in Paris — my word! it's like they're all fire engines.'

Jennifer left elated. Her neighbours traded in this shop and did their post-office business there. The girl was talkative; Jennifer felt the money well spent. If only the answer would come at the right moment. It did, just while she was entertaining her father-in-law for the first time at a knife-and-fork tea. He was a short and knotty man who bought every year a shiny tall hat and wore it every day. In the thriving community of Oldport, he was the only burgess who did this and thus was marked. A lay preacher of incredible word velocity, he was a fundamentalist without having heard the term, and would leave his dry-goods store at any time to deliver his message. His

religious and civic duties — he was a town councillor — interfered with his business, and profits were sufficient for no more than a modest living for himself and his son and partner. He had protested against this Paris honeymoon, but was now completely reconciled. The small 'line of lace edgings and insertion' brought back by his son had been sold out in one day.

'A repeat order goes back quick,' said Mr. Evans to his daughter-in-law, as he sipped his tea; 'and for the soft cloth, too; the drap amoureux.' He pronounced this trade name incorrectly with an expression of disgust — And then arrived the answer to the telegram. Jennifer's hands trembled as she opened the wire. She could hardly repress a cry as she read a message so friendly signed 'Llanthony.' She let the telegram flutter to the table and tried to speak as though wires were an hourly incident.

'Yes, Daddy Evans,' she said, 'I knew that would take. I saw some wonderful mousseline imprimées, too — printed muslins at half our prices, and — But you aren't listening,' she pouted.

He took fascinated eyes from the telegram. 'Nothing wrong, I hope, Jennifer?'

'Oh, no, Daddy Evans.' She cast down her eyes. 'It's good news and I'd like to show it to you. But Ellis says — says — But why not?' She thrust the telegram into his hand.

'The Lord is merciful alike to the innocent and the

guilty,' he said. 'Ellis told me you had met these people.'

'I liked them so much,' she said mournfully.

'They are of the world; but the son — he is of the devil.'

'Tell me, Daddy Evans,' she coaxed. 'What is it? They were so nice. Now he is, too, Lord Llanthony. Can't you ever be friends again?'

Jennifer looked up with gentle appeal. She had staged this scene, foreseeing a telegram lying on the table when her father-in-law should arrive; it had come off better than she had planned. So she had been able to broach the forbidden topic.

'Ellis agrees,' he said. 'We don't want anything to do with them.'

'But, Daddy Evans,' she pleaded, 'they are so kind. They are not stuck-up or proud at all. It was Tybo who said I ought to be the Paris buyer for us. You know how well I did. You know I've just got to go again ——'

'Paris buyer? Go again?'

'Drink your tea while it's hot, Daddy. We can't drop such chances, can we? You'll be an Alderman before very long, you know, and then your turn will come to be Mayor. I should be Mayoress, shouldn't I, Daddy? And what's going to pay for my dresses? And your entertainment allowance will be only two hundred pounds a year, and that — how far will that go? We must have some pride and more money.'

He stared at this girl whom he had thought of as a child until she had uniquely made the honeymoon pay. His secret ambition known to this chit, fearlessly broached, discussed with practical common sense; he caught sight of the bare leg above her rolled stocking and broke out in a vehement sermon against the modern girl, her shameless dress, her shingled hair, her irresponsibility, her light manners, her want of respect for elders. She listened with downcast eyes. When the storm was over, she looked a sad agreement.

‘A girl can’t be different,’ she said regretfully — ‘a man can. You are strong. You can afford to be the only one who wears a top hat every week-day; but, Daddy, you won’t be able to buy a new one every year, with prices always going up, unless we make more money.’

‘Money is the root of all evil.’

‘Yes, so it is. But it buys hats.’ She gave him more tea, very hot, and made fresh toast. In the end he conceded the obvious — the Paris business must be enlarged; but she should never, never go alone to that dangerous place.

‘Of course not. You come, next time.’ She hesitated, then pointed to the telegram. ‘That’s half-way,’ she said softly; ‘you’re a Christian, Daddy. There’s a poor lady over there. You could go the other half.’

She bent to the expected tempest, but it did not

come. She had impressed him; had established a new relationship; he defended his position.

‘My brother and I,’ he said, ‘inherited a ship-broker’s business — not much else, not much money. My brother saw the day of the ship-broker was over. In those days, you could buy a ship for a song. A few thousands to the builder and a mortgage for all the rest; but I would not take these mad risks. He was always after me to do it. It was a gamble — good freights for a couple of years, and you won. Bad freights, bankruptcy. Behind my back he made a syndicate. He pledged the firm’s credit for his share. Four others — one a Greek. In the end they had a ship, the *Star of Hope*, eight thousand tons cargo-carrying capacity; they had paid down five thousand pounds, and the builder held a mortgage for sixty thousand pounds — insane financing that, and low freights too. They took a charter for the *Piræus* — coal. The *Star of Hope* was seized at Athens for breaking some Greek law. The syndicate lost its money, of course, and was dissolved. The builders, of course, could not foreclose. The Greek went to Athens, but reported that he could do nothing. The British Government wrote dispatches. There was a long correspondence. Nothing happened. My brother laughed and told me our capital had vanished. I had half his interest, he said, in this *Star of Hope*, and the sun would shine out again. He started another syndicate. Of course I dissolved the partner-

ship on this breach of confidence and bought in a bankrupt draper's stock with money lent by my father's friends.'

'More tea, Daddy.' Her voice was a caress of sympathy. She made it fresh for him.

'One Sunday afternoon, I was strolling down by the basin. It was high tide and ships were entering. One was the *Star of Hope*, fresh-painted, as good as new. For the first time I saw the vessel which had ruined me and broken my friendship with my brother. I saw him pass me, laughing, and board her at the lock gates. Three days after he came with a check for five times the amount of my interest. I demanded an explanation. He pointed to the check. 'There's four hundred per cent profit,' he said. 'That's the explanation. Now let's be friends and I'll make you rich.' I refused to accept friendship on that basis and did not cash the check. The story soon got out. The whole thing had been arranged before the keel was laid. The Greek had a brother in high official position in the Greek Marine Department. The vessel had been seized and kept out of English ports so that the builders could not claim their dues. She had been run at high freights for a year. When the British Government became peremptory, the vessel was handed back, and the Greek returned with her rich earnings. The astonished syndicate members pocketed their four hundred per cent profit with a laugh. The builders got a large check and grinned. My

brother and the Greek now owned a ship worth much more than she had cost, for freights had gone up. That was the foundation of the fortune and family of Lord Llanthony, my girl.'

'And your check, Daddy.'

'Torn up. I accepted the amount stolen — yes, that's the word — and no more. I never spoke to him again.'

It will be seen that Town Councillor Evans, narrow fanatic though he may have been, was rigidly honest. He was so straight that he bent backward; this was the town estimate of him.

'An unscrupulous man, Jennifer, leading the worldly life, luxury, self-indulgence, a weekly violation of the Sabbath, a despiser of sacred things. I have never told even to Ellis all these details. I tell you, that you may be warned and not be drawn into the net of these worldly people.'

'He may have reformed.'

'Reformed? He is proud of that dishonest business. He took for his crest a ship's propeller, for his coat of arms a vessel beneath a star, for his motto "The Star of Hope." He flaunts it. And this shameless reminder of my failure and his success, he thought my son might one day use. Thank God ——'

'But he may, Daddy — one day Ellis may. Tybo is not married.'

'Don't count on that.' The command was harsh. 'It will never be.'

'It might,' she persisted. 'Ellis can't help being heir.'

'Never — he can't ——' The old man checked; the girl, staring, was alive to confidence withheld.

'Tybo is young, of course,' she wheedled; 'he probably will marry — but until he does ——'

'You will have better things to think of than that,' he said, frowning harshly. 'Ellis will bring you news to-night — you are right, my girl, we must make more money.' He sat brooding. 'Paris — yes. Next week. It's hard for an old man to get out of a rut, Jennifer. One of us will go with you — on one condition.'

'All right, Daddy, I won't see them.'

He patted her hand and rose. 'You are very clever — astonishing,' he said, staring at her.

'Ellis's news, Daddy?'

'Let him tell it all himself. It greatly disturbs me. It will please you.'

At the front door he kissed her. 'Why can't Ellis ever be heir?' she breathed in his ear.

'You will not want him to be, after you hear what he has to say.'

She watched him down the street, solid, respectable, the tall hat gleaming. She felt an immense sense of triumph, culmination of her success as a buyer. When the goods had been snatched from the counter, she had ceased to be a child in the eyes of her father-in-law; to-day he had met her as an equal. Ellis's news — what could that be? She got out the can of

soup that he specially liked and laid the suppertable with a special care. When he came, nervous, excited, his eyes burning, she did not ask a question. When he finally exploded his budget of news, she collapsed. Her tears of pride and joy greatly relieved her; but it was long after midnight before she could sleep.

In the morning, she dressed quite exceptionally for her marketing and made her purchases with a conscious dignity. On her return, she slackened, for a small automobile stood in front of her house and two unfamiliar terriers were larking about. She dropped her basket over the low hedge, thankful that it held no eggs. She had never seen a pinscher-schnauzer, but she knew who was standing, vainly ringing, at her front door. She saw the last word in tweed sporting clothes as Miss Finlay turned with a flick of a wiry-handled dog whip and a cheery halloa. No, Miss Finlay could not stop, could not have a glance at the new little home; she had rushed off for indispensable puppy biscuits and must get back to a starving family. Couldn't Mrs. Evans go with her to tiffin? Her father when young had been in India and so lunch was always tiffin. Back easily by five o'clock; the Moat wasn't thirty miles off.

'It's perfectly saintly of you,' Jennifer said. 'Oh, the grocer's boy has been.' She retrieved the basket, snatched up the telegram, and locked up the house. She was glad that the pinscher-schnauzers were not

quickly obedient in reëntering the automobile. She saw more edges of neighbouring window curtains slily put aside.

Asked about her aunt — she loved it put that way — of course she produced the telegram. 'The latest. I hear every day,' she said.

Miss Finlay was enthusiastic about the good news. 'Of course you'll run over soon?'

'After a while, perhaps. There are reasons — very important reasons — why I can't get away for some weeks.'

This was said with such empressement that Miss Finlay was tickled.

'You're a girl short in the shop,' she laughed, 'and you're acting cashier.'

Jennifer bridled and glanced up, but found no malice in the cheery face. 'I don't go in the shop,' she said with dignity; 'I'm the Paris buyer.'

'Jolly good business too.'

'I'm going to make it so.'

'I say, you're getting on.' She waved a gay hand to a passing automobile, feeling pleasantly unconventional as the occupants looked at her companion. No one but herself, she reflected, had ever taken on the wife of a small draper in Oldport. It was all right, though; Lord Pontlottyn stood by his poor relations. Where he led, none need fear to follow; that is, now that he had reformed. She broke out in praises of him. Jennifer proudly agreed.

They passed Gaylord Hall. 'Mr. Gaylord,' the latter said solemnly, 'is dying.'

'Oh, I hadn't heard. A good sort, too, but a joke as a Member.'

'He got in by a fluke,' was Jennifer's grave comment. 'The Constituency is Labour.'

'And that's so too. I didn't know you took an interest in politics.'

'Oh, lots.'

'Shall we lose the seat, then?'

'The Conservatives will.'

'Ah,' laughed Jack Finlay, 'we are on different sides, I see. But are you Liberal or Labour?'

'Labour. The future is with them.'

'You're frightfully serious about it.'

'Oh, I am. Important things are at stake.'

She changed the subject, but Miss Finlay, intensely amused at discovering this unexpected vein, harked back to it several times. 'You have inside news!' she cried at length. 'Tell me, just between pals.'

'It is not my secret,' Jennifer answered with dignity. 'Oh, there's your tower.'

'Bingley's Tower. Our second farm held by a Bingley for three hundred years. They were copyholders under the lords of the manor and a condition was that they and their men should defend Bingley Tower. My people had a private war in 1427 with one of the lords of the marches and the Bingleys saved us.'

Jennifer had an hour of wonderful pleasure as she went over this ancient manor, peeping into powdering closets where wigs in olden days received their whitening, climbing battlements, peering into a wine cellar that had once been a dungeon, traversing clanging stone halls, inspecting dog kennels. She did not remember a great deal, for she was thinking nearly always of the dizzy social heights which she had so tremendously achieved. Her Sunday-School class had once on an outing been shown over the place by a splendid liveried servant, but she knew no one in Oldport who had been a guest of the family. At moments, remembering her great secret, she felt bound to be critical.

‘How do you keep warm in winter, Miss Finlay?’ she asked.

‘We don’t,’ was the answer given with a shiver.

‘Do you know,’ was Jennifer’s comment, ‘it would be nice to come and look at this place in summer, but I should rather live in my own little snug house.’

Miss Finlay looked this way and that. ‘So would I,’ she whispered, ‘but don’t tell my father.’

Lunch was served in a screened corner of a large hall with a great timbered roof arching overhead. Squire Finlay turned up with Mr. Archibald Baines, jovial, magnetic, paid Conservative agent for Oldport and two of the neighbouring constituencies. Of course, he talked politics, and mischievous Jack Finlay drew the embarrassed Jennifer into the conversation.

Jennifer was astonished at the light manner in which sacred subjects were discussed; Ellis never laughed nor jested when Conservatives were in power and were ruining the country. She winced inwardly at gay contemptuous reference to Labour leaders and she wished that Ellis was a Conservative. She was, however, loyal to him and was intensely flattered by the serious and courteous attention which Mr. Baines ultimately paid to her guarded words. He listened, too, with profound interest to praises of Lord Pontlottyn; a chorus of praise, chanted by all the Finlays. He asked many questions, casually, with pleasant interest; Jennifer again produced her telegram. He spoke of 'poor old Gaylord,' dying; of the coming by-election; of the certain successful result; there would be two opposing candidates again, and the opposition vote would again be split. Laughing, Miss Finlay quoted Jennifer, who flushed and seemed no longer to know anything about it.

Immediately after lunch, Mr. Baines said he must bustle off. Had Mrs. Evans her own car; could he take her back? Thus was she unconsciously delivered over to the enemy by these kindly people, who gave no second thought to the political talk of the table. She gave up her secret before they got more than half-way. Dismayed, she pledged her listener to secrecy. 'Of course, dear little lady, not a word.' She enjoyed this run very much; Mr. Baines was so funny and he made her laugh a lot. She got out of the auto-

mobile in front of her house in a blaze of social triumph.

Mr. Baines took the night train for London and in the morning went by air to Paris. At the hotel he asked for Lord Llanthony's man.

To François he handed five hundred francs. 'His lordship will see me,' he said, producing his card.

'His orders, monsieur; five have been denied this morning. But if monsieur is sure ——'

'Take the card.'

Within five minutes he was with his lordship. Genial, magnetic, he sketched the local political situation, told of the imminent death of Marvin Gaylord and of the near approach of the by-election. Gaylord had sneaked in because the opposition vote had been split. Now there would be but one opposing candidate. The seat would be lost to the party and a moral blow struck at the Ministry, unless — unless —— Baines paused dramatically. This fine organizer, effective speaker, and good talker, focussed penetrating grey eyes on the expressionless, waiting face: 'Your nephew, Ellis Evans,' he announced, 'has gone Labour. He will be their candidate and the Liberals will not send a man to the polls.'

Lord Llanthony smiled. 'The young Robespierre — the sea-green incorruptible — will win,' he admitted.

'Unless — unless ——'

'Part with it, Baines. Here's my check-book.'

‘Yes, we can do with that too.’ He drew himself up and whacked the table with a doubled fist. ‘We want your son; that’s what we want. Ah, I thought that would interest you. We can win with him. The two cousins fighting; appeals to human interest; a touch of humour, too; a sour, unpopular fanatic against a cheery, joyous youth ——’

The startled lord showed no surprise.

‘Oh, an attractive figure,’ Mr. Baines ran on. ‘Lively record, of course, but I couldn’t say that, don’t you know, if I didn’t know that all the wild oats had been sown. People are generous to youthful follies. They like a chap better for ’em, as soon as they see he’s reformed. He has no frills; I get that straight, and that’ll go a long way in that constituency. Here’s a point, a vital point, Llanthony. The cousin couldn’t make a dirty fight. He couldn’t dig into his relatives’ history. Don’t shake your head. It would be bad politics if he did. All the sympathy would be with your youngster.’

The waiter came across to them: ‘Monsieur est servi.’

Mr. Baines made a wonderful meal. His pleasure in the burgundy and the chicken liver was doubled when reminded that he had liked these two things at their last previous lunch two years before. ‘What a memory!’ he said. He became flamboyant, expansive, but he didn’t feel comfortable. He never did in Lord Llanthony’s presence, for he had a great in-

feriority complex and he knew deep down inside that his host was contemptuously aware of this. Most people were deceived; but not this one; Baines was inwardly abject before this penetrating insight. He tried in vain to extract a question, the answer to which he knew must be desired. It was not until he was eating a great bowl of wild strawberries that he exploded his gigantic joke.

The Labour-Liberal deal had not been made public, he said. None but the inner circle of the party knew of Ellis Evans's candidature. But he — Baines — by the purest fluke had chanced to stop at the Moat for lunch and there he had met Mrs. Ellis Evans, most chatty of ladies and eager ignorant disseminator of secrets of state. She was full of her cousin Lord Pontlottyn; the Finlays confirmed everything she said.

'Most complimentary, Llanthony — the little lady was bursting with some great secret, hinted that it was political. So I drove her back to Oldport and out it all spilled — her husband to be candidate. I took the night train to London and flew over this morning. No time to lose. Well, what do you say? "Evans versus Evans." Fine fight! Victory ours.'

Lord Llanthony wrote a check. 'I meant to draw this for five hundred guineas,' he said; 'it's for seven hundred. Don't put the extra two hundred in the party chest. Earmark it. Yes, the boy's come back. He's all you say. But he's been absorbed in his

mother. He's thought of nothing else. I haven't got to know him yet. Relations were strained, of course. It's hard for him to get back; you know, remorse, and all that. Not good business for me to start the ball; refusal, perhaps. But if you headed a little secret delegation ——'

'Ah — yes — easy.'

'Four or five leading chaps. Without notice; behind my back, as it were. I wouldn't even let Tybo know you are coming if I were you. He might be shy and disappear. Quite out of his line, you see; he's not used to being taken seriously.'

Ten minutes completed all details. The political agent slapped himself on the back with high inward commendation for his clever idea and its swift execution. He had nearly a thousand dollars with which to bring a small party to Paris. He foresaw an interesting and amusing interview with an astonished and flattered youth. Serious men, men of standing, coming hundreds of miles to ask him to be a Member of Parliament; of course he would accept. He must accept. His father wanted it; Llanthony always got his way. A most interesting dramatic contest; success almost certain for the Prodigal Son; if not success, such a creditable failure as would start the boy brilliantly on a public career.

Lord Llanthony, having important matters in hand, dismissed the subject from his mind for the moment. He composed in his private code a cypher

telegram addressed to himself and then put the code book in a pocket of one of his suitcases. He went over a dozen letters, endorsed a yes, a no, or a sentence, on each. He studied a typewritten prospectus, erasing a line here, adding a phrase there. This was a slow business and he was still at it when Sara came in.

‘A green velvet dress with a long sweeping train and a flaring Medici collar; did you ever hear of anything so absurd? Had tea, Uncle? He got off all right — quite cross, too. May I ring? I’m so thirsty. Oh, that studio — five hundred years old, I should think, and never cleaned since, but he says he’s only just moved in.’

Lord Llanthony smiled. ‘Cross; why?’

‘Well, six suits of clothes, and a high-powered automobile, and a watch and chain, all before eleven o’clock in the morning, and then a château — that’s going some.’ She flung off her hat and leaned back in her chair, tired but smiling.

‘What else could I do? Time is precious and he must live as we do, as Tybo would.’

‘I told him just that, but you’re such an extravagant dear old uncle. Three suits, a cheaper auto ——’

‘Nonsense — you know it.’ He smiled good-humouredly.

“‘Stifled,” he said; “drowned in a flood of splendour”; he looked at his chauffeur as though he wanted to hit him. The livery; that got him, too; and smart

it is, Uncle. Oh, you do things well, I'll say it. But the lad from Ohio is scared. He shies.'

Lord Llanthony had incidentally suggested that Sara and the boy should lunch together somewhere. He wished to hear just the report he was receiving, wished to know just how drenched the young man felt after the waterspout of luxury. He eyed Sara as she sat bolt upright.

'He's afraid of the effect on himself.' She was deadly serious. She lowered her voice, 'I am too.'

'Ridiculous, Sara.'

'I am more scared than he, Uncle — and that's the solemn truth.'

She jumped up and came over to him. 'He eats it,' she said. 'He knows he does. That's what he's mad about. I'm sure that's it. Little things, a word here and there. A straight, clean boy, Uncle. Oh, why did I ever — but that's nonsense, now, of course. But if he should weaken, Uncle, if this does break down his independence, I'd never, never forgive myself. He has to fight. That proves it. Against what? Himself, one side of himself. He feels a parasite — his own word.'

An uncle, lowering his lids, that he might hide admiration; admiration for her pose, her flushed face, her insight, her flaming words; admiration wrung from a jaded man, who had thought of her three days before as a child; this will give some measure of her vital protest against conditions which she herself had brought about.

'Is he dough,' he asked, 'that a month will slack-bake him? If he's as soft as that — well, my path, and yours, will be easier. We can pay in full. We can give him all these things for life. If he's strong — my dear Sara, he'll wake from a dream, and when he's selling hardware or autos in some little town ——'

'Oh, not that.'

'That's our bargain, Sara. All or nothing. If you understood business, you would agree that he ought to accept capital and start something on a proper basis. He could pay it back, or I could be a sleeping partner. If he understood business, he'd see that that course was not only honourable for himself but fairer to me, to you. We should not have to carry a burden of gratitude. Youth is quixotic, Sara. I shall not press him; you might.'

'Perhaps I'm silly, Uncle. Perhaps you're right. A small-town grocer — oh, he oughtn't to be wasted like that.'

'Of course he oughtn't; but he must be, without capital. Sara, the greatest stimulus in the world is to want something badly enough to work for it. Perhaps we do him a service in teaching him to want things. Perhaps you can convince him that he owes it to himself to begin at the top. If he gets the blues at six suits, don't weep with him. Laugh, and make him buy six more.'

Sara nodded; it sounded fair, reasonable; but she had a vision of a troubled outdoor boy, gasping for breath in a hothouse.

‘And the green velvet dress with the long train and the flaring collar; does he want you to wear that at breakfast in the château?’

Sara laughed. ‘That’s the painter boy. I’ve given him a sitting this afternoon. You saw his sketch. A full-length, life-size — did you ever hear anything so absurd? I’m no Catherine de Medici. He thinks he can do anything. He couldn’t learn to paint that velvet in five years.’

‘You want the portrait? You like him?’

‘He hates Tybo.’

‘Why, in heaven’s name?’

‘Just one of those things that happen. He’s very intimate with the Archers. They’ll never tell him anything, but I’m keeping him sweet.’

‘Does Tybo know?’

‘They just feel it, both of them. They don’t say anything ——’

‘Commission the portrait, Sara — a present from me. Then you can have it as you like.’

‘Rather a good idea, Uncle. He’s hot against all lords — but he means Tybo.’

‘Vexatious. We don’t want enemies. Does Tybo know about the portrait?’

Sara sipped her tea. ‘Yes, he knows, of course. The studio is off the Boulevard Montparnasse. He dropped me there and went on to pick up Peter Archer.’

A moment’s silence during which Lord Llanthony

definitely ceased to be a match-maker. He never attempted the impossible. Let them fight it out themselves. 'An idea, Sara!' he said abruptly, smiling. 'Have the portrait painted for Tybo. He would like it.'

Sara turned her head and quietly looked straight into her uncle's face. 'Below the belt,' she said. 'I didn't want to tell you all this stuff, but it counts. Sam Tibbetts could be dangerous.'

'Turn him down, now.'

'Impossible, unless the Archers go, too — and they *know*.'

Lord Llanthony pursued a conversation which three days before he would have deemed impossible; but he had learned much of the modern girl. 'When Peter goes to the château, you go to the studio?' he asked.

'That's about it,' was the calm admission.

'Why? Pique?'

'Honestly I don't know, Uncle. If it's more than that, I'm not going to find it out too late. I like Peter. She's decent and straight. But he's been living in their pockets, and they share his intimate secret — and, well, she admires him no end. So do I, Uncle. I found him — not she. If I only knew, if I was certain, I'd annex him, right now. But I'm not. Am I going to let things drift and then, when she comes and asks congratulations, am I going to wake up, give a great start, and hide the anguish of my heart?'

‘Bravo, Sara. If you decide to pick this peach, remember one thing. He’ll hang to the branch unless he’s rich.’

‘And I believe that, too.’

‘Then train him. Teach him that money from me goes with self-respect. Is he coming back here to-night? Oh, at the Archers’; and you’re going there for a late supper? Then decode this copy of a telegram for me, do you mind? The code book is somewhere in my baggage. I wired my Chicago correspondents to send a safe man to Butte City and bring Tybo over here quick.’

A quarter of an hour later, Sara had finished her task. ‘That’s it, Uncle,’ she told him. ‘Their messenger has left Butte with Eastman.’

‘Quite right. Tybo took that name — he had reason. No one knows who he is. Tell the boy — show him the wire.’

They were silent. Sara, though relieved, thought of a mother’s heartache; the real son must prove a bitter contrast. Lord Llanthony, with all his hardy assurance, found it revolting to forge messages about a dead son.

CHAPTER X

A LOT of industrious beavers, these four young people, working together with light hearts to put a house in order; a force of men under an English-speaking foreman was engaged at the château; Paris purchases were made without hesitations or delays; Tybo found his secretaryship no sinecure. He was in the highest spirits, for the end was in sight. He did not care now what he did, nor what he accepted; how foolish to draw the lines, or to cavil at this or that when his successor was on the way. The automobile, the liveried chauffeur, the six suits of clothes, the silken underwear, the bulging pocket-book, the bank account, the château itself: how absurd not to revel in these delights for the short two or three weeks they would last. Some people save and save, just to play the millionaire for a month, just to have the intense pleasure of buying what they want and doing what they will without thought of the cost. The chance had come to him honourably, unsought. He was having a vacation beyond the wildest dream of imagination. With the knowledge that it was about to end, he did what others at the seaside or in the mountains do; he revelled in each of the few remaining days.

One evening he sat in the twilight with Peter Archer on the terrace of the château. They looked

out over the valley stretching wide and green — ‘Emeralds strung on the silver wire of the Loire,’ she murmured — ‘how lovely.’ She turned her face to him. ‘What comes after?’ she asked.

‘What comes when any holiday ends? Why talk about it?’

‘I think of it. We all do. We’ve had such jolly times together. Need they end?’

‘Forget it, Peter.’ His tone was impatient.

‘You may be willing to forget your friends ——’

‘Oh, cut it out. I am shutting my eyes.’

‘Open them wide. You’ll see something. You might see some chance in Paris, something to do here.’ She put a hand on his arm.

‘As a speaker of French,’ he said, ‘I’m a boiler-maker.’

She took out a cigarette and he lighted a match for her. She glanced at him as the tiny flame fluttered out.

‘The auto is very late,’ he said.

‘We don’t want to lose you and that’s the truth, Tybo. Why don’t you let Lord Llanthony start you in something? Or Frank would. He has plenty. He has spoken about it. He would consider it good business. That’s how much he thinks of you.’

‘That’s mighty kind, Peter. Wouldn’t I be a yellow canary if I stayed in Europe? I’d be popping Lord Llanthony one all right, wouldn’t I, to live on the same continent? No. One Tybo at a time. I fade out.

‘He’s forced that,’ she cried, ‘and you fall for it! He’s starred you, underlined you, flaunted you, he and Sara. Anybody but you can see why — so’s you’ll just have to go.’

‘I don’t believe it,’ he declared flatly, surprised at her indignant tone, at her attack on Sara.

‘I don’t mean to be nasty.’ There was a little break in her voice and a hint of apology. ‘But you’ve done them an immense service, oh, perfectly immense, and — and’ — her voice fell almost to a whisper — ‘they use you.’

‘Of course they do. What’s got you to-night, Peter?’

‘Oh,’ she flamed. ‘Open your eyes wide. They’re not fair. They’re not above-board. You’re so straight, you don’t see what others do.’

‘Peter!’

‘I’m sorry,’ she said humbly. ‘Sara is perfectly lovely. She’s splendid in lots of things. I think heaps of her. But Lady Llanthony was a frightfully worldly woman and she’s had Sara with her a lot. And he — well, everybody knows Lord Llanthony. Always a schemer. How can Sara help herself? It’s a point of view. You don’t know you’ve got it. You just go on scheming everything your way. You could have been hidden away all this time. You know you could. Outside the hospital and ourselves, nobody need have known you as Lord Pontlottyn. Was it good sense, or good business to star you? How can the real Tybo

come here? You know he can't. Why have they seemed to play the fool? One reason — there's only one. To make you so conspicuous that you must go back to the States. With their debt of gratitude to you, they couldn't dare to say afterwards that you must go back if you wished to stay. They couldn't presume to give orders to you about your future life. But they could make you so well known that you just have to go to save yourself embarrassment. They've done it all right. You couldn't walk the Grands Boulevards without being hailed at least once as Lord Pontlottyn. Well, will you stand for it? The embarrassment's theirs, not yours. You could explain.'

She burst into tears — this irresponsible, gay-hearted kid, in tears! Tybo put his arm round her. She nestled close. The boy felt most uncomfortable.

'I'm silly,' she sniffed; 'please forgive me. But you don't really have to go, you know.'

'Ah, there's the auto. Come, Peter.' He sprang up too quickly. 'Why do you always say "they"?' he asked gravely as they walked down to the road.

She stumbled, sure-footed Peter — and caught his arm. She leaned heavily.

In the open auto, she was silent for a long time. Then she laughed. 'It's the gloaming, Tybo,' she confessed; 'it always makes me melancholy. I'm sorry.'

'Why do you always say "they"?' he repeated.

'Sara's fine, she's splendid,' she answered, 'but she's clever. Her eyes are always open. She knows what she's doing, always.'

'She rates at the top,' he defended. 'She's absolutely straight.'

'Of course, so are you.'

'But you said ——'

'Oh,' she cried, a little pettishly, 'don't you know that a girl's straightness is different from a boy's?'

'I did not know it.'

'Well, it's true.' She was suddenly fluttering high spirits and rattling out amusing nonsense. He felt relieved and laughed with her. Moods — he had never suspected it; about his going, too. That was nice of the kid, but he wished she would not see black in the twilight. Perhaps it was true about Lord Llanthony; perhaps he did wind about a little when he might go straight; but Sara, never. It did not matter. He thought less of Peter because she could not see that he was in honour bound to go. Any man would see it. Attacking Sara, too; that was funny. Still, it was nice to think that she was going to miss him such a lot. Why couldn't she have kept her mouth shut? He wanted to forget — to enjoy. Oh, hang the kid! When they finally neared her home, she kissed him full on the mouth.

'Don't go, Tybo,' she whispered.

'If you promised one every day,' he answered, 'I could not stay.'

‘As many as you like when you like.’

He opened the door of the auto. Oh, darn the kid — getting sentimental.

They were waiting late supper. Peter, bright-eyed, suddenly full of ginger, danced over and kissed surprised Sara.

‘Oh, go the rounds,’ Sam Tibbetts yelled.

Peter flung her arms round his neck and kissed him too. They sat down to a merry meal, but sometimes Sara looked reflectively from Tybo to sparkling, boyish Peter, not usually given to kissing. A pressing claim for kindly aid came up in the talk. An American woman with a child two years old, deserted by her husband, in actual want; relations in the United States; her fare must be paid somehow.

‘Do you box?’ Sam Tibbetts cried, and Tybo nodded incautious assent.

‘My studio,’ Tibbetts said. ‘International contest; Great Britain versus United States; Lord Pontlottyn against Sam Tibbetts; matched middle-weights. Fine! Tickets, five dollars. Great sporting event. All receipts to charity without deductions. We’ll get that passage money, all right. A little soft, my lord? So am I. Two weeks for training. How about it? A cinch.’

The idea was acclaimed amid laughter. It was apparent that the two were thinking less of charity than of getting their fists into each other’s faces. Tybo forgot for an instant that he must fight for Great

Britain, that he must court blazing publicity; he thought only of the joy of punching this irritating youth, who was always annoying him with sly digs and who was painting the portrait of Sara. He measured his opponent with appraising eyes. The fellow had ten pounds more weight — all the better.

‘Thank you, Sam Tibbetts,’ Sara said, ‘and so that’s how you do my portrait. You risk a sprained thumb, a strained muscle. Do you think I’m going to wait?’

‘Oh, come — it shall be finished before the grand international battle.’

Sara shook her head. ‘I’m sorry, but I can’t spare time for a sitting till next week.’

‘But you said ——’ Tibbetts was angry.

‘Much too busy.’

They could see from the way that he looked from Sara to Tybo that he was thinking whether he would rather fight or paint. Sara won. ‘In a month?’ he said. My lord, wishing it were now, nodded assent.

A cloud hung over the evening, in spite of Peter’s gaiety. It was always that way, Tybo thought, when Sam Tibbetts was there; all had to be on guard. It was a relief when Frank Archer put his head out of the window to the sound of an automobile and then announced, ‘My lord’s man is below.’

Sara flung on her wraps. Tibbetts grabbed his hat. ‘I’m going your way, Miss Desmond. Could you give me a lift?’

‘With pleasure. What time to-morrow for your chauffeur, Tybo?’

‘Nine o’clock, please.’

Tibbetts left with sly, irritating thanks to my lord for the use of his automobile. Tybo’s hands clenched when the door had closed and he projected a fist. He turned to Peter’s good-night and saw her pale and weary. He watched her lagging walk, her drooping head.

‘Peter’s overdone it, Frank. There’s a lot of running about down there. I must look out for her. I thought she was as strong as a young pony.’

‘Even ponies get tired at night,’ said the brother.

They smoked a good-night cigarette together. Tybo laughed. ‘Time the play stopped,’ he said. ‘I was asked for my papers down there — oh, a trifle; a slight accident in front of the château. The gendarme came to hear my version of what I saw. All I could show him was the Embassy letter about my passport. He gave it the once over and was satisfied; but the next man won’t be. Yes — time for the curtain to ring down.’

Frank nodded, unusually silent for him.

‘Lord Llanthony,’ Tybo laughed, ‘doesn’t give a hang what he does when he’s after something. He couldn’t fall for my view about the passport at all. He said an oath of allegiance was a mere formality and after swallowing a camel why should I strain at a gnat? He didn’t press me at all. He never does that.

But it's going some, isn't it, to ask a chap to swear a false oath?' Tybo chuckled. 'I asked him why he had the château deeded to me. Income tax and other complications, he explained; he saved money and trouble by not owning real estate. Why not to his wife, to Sara, I asked, instead of me? He laughed. 'What's your name?' says he. He had me there. I'm so wound up and muddled and twisted that I claimed a château that's deeded to Tybo Evans, commonly known as Lord Pontlottyn. So the boy comes back to a home he owns; and that was what the old man was really after. Good idea, heigh?'

He yawned. He was tired, sleepy, but he did not want to be alone. The shadow of the coming parting lay heavy to-night, the parting with a mother who must be told of an exchange of sons. He let his cigarette go out as he speculated on the kind of young man who was coming. If the son was all right — but what chance of that with the son's record?

'I've watched the papers for the murder case,' said Frank. 'Nothing doing ——'

'Good.'

Another long silence. Frank was tired too. Funny thing, thought Tybo, these twins went up and down together. Reluctantly he went to bed.

The sound of his closing door opened that of Peter. She stole out, barefooted, in shimmering pyjamas. She sat at her brother's feet, her head in his lap. He lighted a cigarette for her.

‘Do you like her, Frank — a lot, I mean?’

‘Yes, but not enough. Don’t worry about the treaty of Luxembourg, old girl.’ He patted her head.

‘I’m a pig,’ she sighed, ‘but — of course we were idiots. The treaty is dead.’

No listener could know what these twins meant. Their minds ran so smoothly together that they half-said everything. On their twenty-first birthday they had made a solemn compact in the Gardens of the Luxembourg. Neither should marry except at a double wedding. Their cryptic utterances now meant that Peter was in love and hoped that Frank was too. If he would marry Sara, she was free to win Tybo.

She thrust up a pinched, eager face. ‘I’m sorry,’ she murmured, ‘yet I’m glad. I hate red hair.’ The last words were vehemently cried out. ‘I’ve gone mad, Frank. I’m crazy. That’s the truth. I’ve fallen for him so hard I hate him. It hurts me so much to hate him that I love him more.’ She sprang to her feet. ‘Look at me,’ she commanded, lifting his chin. ‘Have you seen anything, heard anything, guessed anything? Is he in love with her?’

He looked startled, troubled.

‘Haven’t you got any further than that?’ he asked. ‘And you’ve let yourself go like this! Peter, pull yourself together.’

‘Pull an earthquake, a tornado together!’ she cried in a shrill voice. ‘No, it’s not a race. I don’t know

if anybody's running but me. But I've got to win; I've just got to win.' She padded up and down the room in her bare feet, her hair touzled, her face distraught. 'I know he's poor,' she said. She snapped her fingers. 'I know he doesn't care for the things we care for. No matter. But Paris — to give up Paris. I'd fight to the death for that.'

'Look here, kid,' her brother said, 'you've got to fight for him first. Forget the rest.'

'Shameful!' she cried. 'They've used him, fooled him, to deceive a poor old blind woman — to commit a big fraud. I ——'

'Quiet, Peter, quiet. Be fair ——'

'Crooks! That's what they are. A pair of them — and they use him.'

'Peter!' He was alarmed at her unbridled words, her vehemence. She stopped in front of him. Her half-closed eyes, her curled lip changed the impish face into one of snarling menace. 'They had better look out, Frank. I'll stand just so much.' She turned and scuttled into her room.

Her brother sat for a long time, staring into an empty grate. Peter's first trouble; thus far they had laughed through life; and jealousy had suddenly transformed her. He was very sorry for her. He feared that Sara had already won this stranger that they had with such light hearts picked up in Paris slums in the early morning hours. What more natural? The two had been living a fairy tale together. Misery

then for Peter, the gay-hearted, kindly Peter, so changed already that she saw dark motives and sinister meanings in Sara's innocent acts. She threatened, too — Peter threatened. Frank unerringly read into her last words exactly what she meant. If she lost this Tybo to Sara, she would expose the great Pontlottyn deception. She meant it too. Her brother doubted whether he could restrain her. Never a serious difference before, and now it had come, so swiftly, so sharply, that it threatened cleavage. 'Hang the fellow!' Frank cried; 'why did we drag him here?' He went to bed greatly disturbed.

Tybo played secretary the next day and dictated to a grand young lady, much decorated with imitation pearls. He expanded the curt endorsements on his lordship's letters and the young lady typed in either language, as he wished. It seemed odd to him to talk English and see French emerge, and he wished that the capable, beautiful lady provided by the hotel would use less scent. One letter interested him. It offered to underwrite an issue for fifty-five thousand pounds. Afterwards he asked Lord Llanthony about it.

'This London shipping company,' said his lordship, 'is sound. It is going to the public for a large sum. It is popular, well known. All the shares will be subscribed. It is good plunder for me. I offer to underwrite the issue. That is, I guarantee to take all that the public does not take. If my offer is accepted,

they will pay me this two hundred and fifty thousand pounds.'

'For what?' asked the surprised Tybo; 'you say the public will take it all.'

'My boy, I'm doing it cheap. I'm insuring the company against war, against a panic, against the death of the King, against a terrific gale that would put investors off shipping for a whole week, against a revolution in one of the great nations — against anything and everything that might kill the issue. Fifty things might happen. I take the risk. It would strain my resources to do my part if anything did happen; but I could do it. I'd have to carry the shares till better times. And now do you think I'm overpaid?'

'It seems a lot of money.'

'It is cheap, I tell you.'

'When you have a lot,' Tybo observed, 'it seems easy to make more.'

Lord Llanthony laughed. 'The first million takes the trouble,' he said. 'After that, you sit still and think, and the flood pours in.'

He talked at some length about politics, English politics. The pungent comments, the inside knowledge, interested the boy, who could not guess that he was acquiring a smattering, that his answer to a delegation from England should not be quite too foolish.

CHAPTER XI

BLUNT, jolly Jacqueline Finlay was again at the door of the Oldport villa, but this time its mistress was at home.

‘I’m damnably angry, Jennifer,’ she began immediately — ‘I may say Jennifer, mayn’t I? I want to know exactly what you told that old corkscrew Baines when you drove down with him.’ Jennifer blanched and stepped back. ‘I thought so. What a disgusting thing to do! You come and visit us, and you think you’re safe among friends, and you’re seething with a secret — and, of course, you boil over. He makes you boil over. Oh, I don’t blame you a lot. Where could you learn that the only safe friend is a dog? He’ll never tell your secrets. The last man in all the world who ought to know it.’

Jennifer burst into tears. ‘He promised not to tell,’ she sobbed. ‘And the misery I’ve endured since, perfect agony, and if Ellis ever learns ——’ She had no words for that. She sank, despairing, to a seat.

‘Beastly hard lines, Jennifer, they’re going to run Pontlottyn against your husband.’

Jennifer looked puzzled.

‘Oh, don’t you see? The two cousins fighting. All the town knows about the family row. Your husband — well, let us say he’s respected. You can’t say he’s popular. Tybo comes with his jolly manners. I tell

you he'll win — win, do you understand? I want him to, of course; he's my party. But the candidacy shall not come as a surprise to you. They've done you dirt — a guest in my house. Tell your husband.'

'Never — oh, oh!' Jennifer, in despair, was not pretty.

'Silly, he can't beat you.'

'Oh, if that was all,' wailed the unhappy bride.

'Oh, buck up! If you are as afraid of him as all that, why don't you have a shot at stopping it?'

'Stop what, the election?'

'Stupid! Only a revolution could do that. Poor old Gaylord is dead. The blinds were drawn when I passed. It'll take two weeks for the writs to come down from London. Can't you get Pontlottyn not to stand? He likes you. He wouldn't run, perhaps, if you wrote to him how the secret had been wheedled out of you.'

A gleam of hope; Jennifer got pretty again.

'He hasn't accepted. He doesn't know.' Jack Finlay was a little curt. She hated sloppy women. 'A delegation's going to-morrow afternoon to Paris to ask him. Baines wanted my dad to go, but his kennelman is ill and he can't leave his dogs. That's how I knew about it.'

'I'm the Paris buyer of the company,' Jennifer said reflectively.

Jack Finlay jumped up in the air. 'Would you, could you go?' she cried. 'My pinscher-schnauzers

are out of condition. I need some of the biscuits they're used to. I'll go with you like a shot.'

'Ellis would never allow it.'

'Nonsense! Can you work him better with me or without me?'

'Come,' Jennifer said.

An astonished husband and a surprised father-in-law received the important Miss Finlay of the Moat with impressive courtesy. She was called to Paris, she said, Jennifer was welcome to come with her if they approved.

'I don't want to go, Ellis, but we could save the late summer trade if I go now — and I could look about for autumn novelties. It's now or never, remember.'

It was just that. Ellis absorbed in politics, the old man tied to the business: it was the only chance. The husband finally yielded. They needed every dollar they could get. Jennifer received many cautions that afternoon and was bound anew not to seek out her worldly connections by marriage.

The two political amateurs arrived in Paris at noon the next day, six hours ahead of the other party. One went buying dog biscuits and calling on Sara. The other went buying laces and lingerie. They met at two o'clock. 'He is in Tours,' Jack Finlay reported, 'where they've bought a country house. He's staying overnight there. I've looked up trains. We can get a train if you hurry.'

At seven, astonished Tybo resting on the terrace, tired out, saw two women get out of an auto in the road below. He uttered an exclamation of impatience. He had arranged to stay over to escape Peter. Then he was sure of bad news and went down to meet them. 'My sideburns!' he muttered — 'Jennie!'

'Tybo!' she cried, flushing, looking mysterious, tumbling out incoherent words of explanation which explained nothing.

'Had dinner, Lord Ponty?' Jack Finlay asked when Jennifer's breath failed. 'Our tiffin was a biscuit and a glass of milk and we are starving.'

'My auto's just coming to take me to Tours for a square meal. Come with me. I'll pay yours off.'

'You save our lives,' she said, looking up at the imposing façade looming high above in the early twilight. 'I say, you are doing yourself well. I'd like a peep inside, but there's your car and I'm positively famished.'

She was in radiant mood. She had come for a lark, and she was certainly having it. What luck! Catching him alone like this in this beautiful romantic Touraine. Bringing him news too — news that must thrill him. She hoped he would accept. She had honourably done her part to prevent it. Perhaps he would put up at the Moat; how perfectly ripping! 'Our visit could be a secret, couldn't it?' she asked as she settled back in the luxurious automobile. 'You

see, I'm a traitor to my cause and Jennifer is a spy from the enemy's camp.'

'Gee, gurgle it all out.'

'Not a word till you've had something to eat. Jennifer wants a great favour, oh, an immense favour, and you must be in a good humour. I saw Miss Desmond in Paris and she just incidentally mentioned where you were. She does not know I'm seeing you. She does not know that Jennifer is in Paris. I was so glad to hear that Lady Llanthony is improving so fast.'

'Fine, isn't it?'

Jennifer, appalled now by her temerity in coming at all, by the tremendous sacrifice she was about to ask, sat silent. Her thoughts whirled about everywhere, dwelling at moments on the secret which her father-in-law had refused to disclose. She had reflected on this every day. He had hinted that she need not worry her head about any chance of Ellis's ever being Lord Pontlottyn. She eyed her cousin sidewise. Was he married, secretly married, and did Daddy Evans mean that? She was annoyed that Miss Finlay could be so light and airy when such immense issues were at stake. How could she postpone the important subject? Was he going to be married? Were this beautiful home and this splendid car meant for a bride? Daddy Evans couldn't have meant that — yet perhaps he had. Of course he would marry some day; she knew she was silly; but

when he did marry, she would cry for a week. She was sure she couldn't help it. To be the wife of a Member of Parliament that was splendid. To be Lady Pontlottyn, and one day, Lady Llanthony; that was a gorgeous dream. And the same person stood between her and both ambitions. She liked him — oh, yes — but she wished he had never been born. Would he refuse to run for Parliament? Oh, he must. Why should he have everything? She eyed him again as he and Jack Finlay talked. He seemed more decided, more serious, than she remembered him, not quite so American, either, and a lot more what a lord ought to be. A little French, too; he had given orders to his chauffeur in quite a lordly way. Jennifer never said a word during all the drive.

'A private dining-room,' suggested Jack Finlay at the hotel; 'leave it to me.' But even her perfect French could not get it. Every room was let to tourists and there was not a waiter to spare. She couldn't even secure a table next to French-speaking people; there was not such a party in the crowded dining-room. 'We must talk in whispers,' she warned.

It was not till the second course was served that the dumbfounded Tybo learned that he would receive a delegation on the morrow which would request him to stand for a seat in Parliament. He looked from one to the other; no, they certainly had not come all this way to play a joke on him.

The two girls talked at once. He could not hear for the clatter and they did not wish to raise their voices lest they be overheard. He grasped the fact that the deputation wanted to see him before meeting Lord Llanthony, wanted to size him up, in fact, and would probably get his address without saying why it was wanted.

‘I must go to Paris to-night,’ he said; ‘I must see Lord Llanthony. What if I drive you two back and you can put me wise on the way?’

He was so panic-stricken that he wanted to start that minute. Not so, Jacqueline. She made a leisurely meal and lingered over coffee, refusing to be depressed by the anxious Jennifer or the preoccupied lord. When at last they did get started, she exclaimed on the dim quaintness of the town and the dusky loveliness of the country, and asked a hundred questions about the neighbourhood. ‘Plenty of time to talk on the Paris road, Jennifer,’ she said; ‘let’s enjoy ourselves now.’ So Tybo remained in ignorance of the great favour to be asked of him. He did not care, did not pause to wonder why these two had come. All he thought of was to get to Paris. There he would be hidden. Lord Llanthony could do what he pleased, come to Tours and ‘receive the deputation’ if he would. Flight, instantly, and quick touch — that night, at any old hour — with his lordship. Some one in this delegation — Tybo saw twenty men in it, at least — might know the real Tybo. Oh! A pretty

scene! A crowd of important men coming hundreds of miles to find an impostor. A Member of Parliament — him? In the States twenty men wanted to be Members of Congress. Here, twenty men came to find one. The office sought the man in England, sure. Funny country.

At the *château* Jacqueline insisted on a look at the inside. While he waked his English-speaking foreman and gave orders, the visitors were shown the place by the housekeeper, who had been taken over with the *château*. 'What luck!' murmured Jacqueline, delighted. Tybo, suitcase in hand, joined them in the grand salon, upstairs.

'Oh, milor,' protested the grey-haired lady as she took the suitcase and went down with it.

'One minute for the view — one only, remember,' he said as he unfastened the French window and stepped out on the balcony.

A ringing voice hailed him from below.

Jennifer and Jacqueline, staring at each other, became petrified figures as they listened.

'Y-e-s, I am Lord Pontlottyn.'

'May we intrude for a minute — just a minute? We are asking an appointment with you to-morrow.'

'Baines!' Jacqueline squeaked.

'Oh, oh!' wailed Jennifer, panic-stricken.

Tybo, wild-eyed, came running in. 'The housekeeper is bringing them here.'

‘Pull yourself together,’ Jacqueline said, shaking with laughter.

‘You must refuse — you must,’ Jennifer pleaded as she was hustled into the darkness of an adjoining room. She shut the door.

‘No, we must hear this,’ Jacqueline whispered, and she softly turned the handle and peeped through the streak of light.

Baines came first, genial, confident. ‘A great pleasure, Lord Pontlottyn, a very great pleasure!’ he cried heartily, as he held his lordship’s hand. ‘Baines, Baines of Oldport, old friend of your father. Probably you’ve heard my name. If you haven’t, I’m Conservative agent for Oldport and several constituencies in the country. Let me present Sir Spicer Grandlyn of Wildhart Park — you know, Master of the Wildhart Hounds, of course. Well, all I can say is that Sir Spicer is as good a Conservative as he is a sportsman. And Mr. Garstin of Garstin, Lord Pontlottyn, a leading light in our county and a strong supporter of our party principles. We meant to make sure of you to-morrow, that’s all.’ He turned to the two men. ‘What say you, gentlemen? If Lord Pontlottyn can spare us half an hour now ——’

They nodded, eyeing Lord Pontlottyn with courteous curiosity.

‘In that case,’ Baines resumed, ‘we will state our errand.’

‘Oh, please do,’ the victim stammered. ‘Sit down, gentlemen.’

They sat, all but Baines. Tybo, pale, anxious, glanced at these emissaries, come to lay a crown at his feet. He was reassured; it was clear that none of them had ever seen the real Tybo. Sir Spicer, tall, slender, very correct, dressed with careful precision, eyed him through a monocle, not at all offensively, but obviously measuring his possibilities as a candidate. Mr. Garstin, white-haired, kindly, smiled encouragement. The boy pulled himself together. He just had to get through this somehow, this dreadful ordeal, this stupendous, ridiculous result of pretending to be a lord. These important men, coming hundreds of miles on this fool's errand; humiliating for them — for this dear old man, who radiated encouragement and good will. Oh, he must not fail. His troubled, wandering eyes lingered, fascinated, for an instant on an arm, which popped through a door and waved up and down. He ducked his head lest his consternation be observed; then he saw that only he faced that way and that the impudent signal reached him alone. He heard Baines's voice, knew that the man had been talking all the time. He had not heard a word. He listened, now, '... you have not,' Baines was saying. 'We know you've been abroad a lot and you are not expected to be in touch with politics. Youth has its own interests and none of us want old heads on young shoulders. Let me say frankly that this political career which we have come to offer is such, perhaps, as a young man

in your position has a right to expect — but all the same we are offering it on a silver salver. I must make it clear to you that we offer a brilliant opening, an opening such as few young men in this age ever get. On the other hand, you are necessary to us. You are the one candidate who can save the seat to the party. It is your solemn duty, my lord, to stand. The eyes of England, of Great Britain, will be focussed on this contest. The Prime Minister will regard with special favour the young man who at the call of his country instantly and without hesitation flings himself into the breach and leads the forlorn hope to victory.'

'Hear! Hear!' murmured Sir Spicer. Garstin smiled and nodded his silvered head encouragingly to the wild-eyed youth.

'As I have said,' Baines continued, 'your opponent will be your cousin. I will not touch further on family matters than to say that neither Mr. Ellis Evans nor his father has hidden violent and unreasonable antagonism to your father and yourself.'

'Hear! Hear!' cried Mr. Garstin.

'Thank you for that support, Garstin. You speak with some feeling, and our young friend here may guess that you have special knowledge of this unhappy prejudice — entirely one-sided, I know personally. I have met the wife of your opponent and heard from her own lips how generous and forgiving is the attitude on your side of the house. There is an element of humour there. I first heard of you, beyond mere

rumour, from this charming and somewhat garrulous lady' — distressed Tybo saw the door swing an inch in protest — 'and it was her praises which first led us to think of the ideal opponent for her husband.' Laughter from the three men. 'It is against the best traditions of our public life to import personal matters into political contests.'

'Hear! Hear!' from Sir Spicer.

'But still, I must point out to you, Lord Pontlottyn, that the name which your father has lifted to such heights of dignity and honour has been ignominiously trailed in the dust by the other branch. In joining the Labour Party, in accepting socialistic, even communistic, views, your cousin has chosen party before country, and for personal ambition has allied himself with the forces of anarchy and disruption. You, you only, can nip in the bud the aspirations which might flower into public menace. Mr. Ellis Evans has a certain gift of the gab, a deadly absence of humour, a fanaticism which holds the mob, and, in my opinion, hides an unbridled and unscrupulous ambition. Lord Pontlottyn, duty calls you. We have come with the summons. I will ask Mr. Garstin to support my request.'

Garstin rose and put his hand on Tybo's shoulder. 'We want fresh blood, my boy,' he said. 'Mr. Baines has put it well and I needn't add a word. Don't worry about youth or inexperience. These are overcome too soon. We need you.'

Sir Spicer Grandlyn added his appeal. 'Have a shot at it, old chap,' he said; 'er — er — these rotters think they have a walkover, don't you know, and 'pon my word, I b'lieve they're right, unless you do your little bit. Er — er' — he fingered his tie — 'we're all behind you. We'll give 'em fits if you take it on. Er — er, oh, I say, I'm no damn good at speechifying, but — chuck your hat in the ring.' He stopped, more embarrassed than his listener.

Tybo, white, trembling, rose to his feet. He did not know that he was showing to the full the quality most attractive to older men in England — modesty. He little guessed that everything he did and tried to say was building him up with three men who had doubtfully sought a desperate remedy for a desperate position. His very appearance was a denial of the rumours of an ill-spent youth. His timidity charmed them. They knew that it would disarm any audience. He would soon learn, would soon gain confidence; they nodded approval because he could not say what he wanted to say. Baines drew himself up with a satisfied air; his political genius was again proved by this brilliant coup. But what was this? A refusal? Impossible. An intelligible sentence had at last come from stammering lips.

'I could not, gentlemen. The honour . . . But how could I? . . . Lady Llanthony . . . every day . . . I could not leave her . . . Besides, I don't know anything about politics. I thank you for this great

honour. I am sorry you have had this journey for nothing.' Tybo plumped into a chair, trembling.

Baines, smiling, clapped him on the shoulder. 'Very creditable, my lord,' he cried; 'just what we expected — I may say, hoped. We should have done the more usual thing in approaching your father first, but we chose this path. That filial affection which dictates your refusal — and we all admire you for it — would, of course, dictate your acceptance.'

'Hear! Hear!' from Sir Spicer.

'Yes, yes,' from Mr. Garstin.

'So, gentlemen' — he turned to his colleagues — 'we will get to Paris straight away. We sympathize profoundly with our young friend about the illness of his mother. We understand that she is improving fast. We will see Lord Llanthony. If he, if Lady Llanthony, give their full consent?'

He looked at the boy, who promptly nodded his head in assent, annoyed that he had not himself thought of this simple solution. Lord Llanthony would of course quash the matter.

Could he possibly run up to Paris with them? They had motored down. Their auto was at the door. His excuse that Lady Llanthony was to be moved on the Monday and that he must stay and hasten preparations was accepted as sound. He walked down the terrace with them. They parted from him as from their accepted candidate and with a genuine cordiality and good will.

'You'll want,' were the final words of Baines, 'to see your mother comfortably installed, so we shan't expect you in Oldport until Wednesday or Thursday. In the meantime, we'll start the ball rolling.'

As the auto rolled along, Garstin said enthusiastically, 'Baines, you are a genius. The boy's all right.'

'A clever lad,' Sir Spicer commended, and he grinned. He had seen a woman's arm flash in a mirror and drew conclusions from that and the waiting auto. The boy had a girl there; he had not overdone his reform, but he had learned the great lesson — not to be found out.

Tybo rushed back, excited, triumphant. He'd been a dustman at it, he reflected, but he had pulled it off. And they had seemed to like him, too. Not such a hardship for them, after all, so long as they hadn't found him out; a jolly political junket. He was in no hurry now. No Paris for him until that crowd had got away. He sauntered into the salon, trying to look as though he received deputations every day. Jennifer stood in the middle of the room staring from mournful eyes. Jack Finlay danced over, excited, bubbling.

'I say, Ponty,' she cried, 'you were top hole, simply ripping! Jennifer, I can't help it, I'm frightfully sorry, but I can't go back on my party. Ponty, you've just got to stand. A man who could handle a deputation, and *that* deputation — we love Mr. Garstin, we

kowtow to Sir Spicer — well, you can win — you can win.'

'What, another deputation?'

'I've never been called that, but I'm it if you'll stand.'

'Here they stand; in the States they run — funny thing, language.'

Sad Jennifer came. 'Did you hear what he said about Ellis?' she said with a catch in her voice, 'and me — he called me garrulous. And I was only trying to be interesting ——'

'Rot!' Miss Finlay exclaimed. 'It's only politics. A Labour Member told my dad once he was the only dog in the Moat kennels whose bark no man feared. We did laugh. Oh, you're going to hear something in this election — this is good training.'

Jennifer grabbed the lapels of the candidate's coat. 'We came,' she implored, 'to ask you not to stand. That beastly old spy dragged Ellis's secret from me and then thought of you because I told the truth about you.' She burst into tears. 'He thinks it's a joke. And I've ruined Ellis — and he'll hear about it, of course. Oh, you won't accept, will you?'

'You must accept, Ponty!' Jacqueline cried earnestly. She turned to Jennifer. 'It isn't what I came for, I know,' she pleaded. 'But I simply can't be the one to throw away a Conservative seat and ruin a career that starts like this. You know those men, Jennifer, top hole — what they say is done. They were frightfully pleased.'

Jennifer sighed. 'If I had a vote,' she admitted as though the words were wrung from her, 'I'd vote for you, Tybo.' Jacqueline burst into ringing laughter. Tybo smiled. 'But you mustn't accept, Tybo. Lord Llanthony will want it, of course. Even if he does ——' She looked very pretty and appealing as she checked, lest she sob.

Tybo stood, looking from the pleasing, animated, ugly face of the one girl into the pleading eyes of the other. This delegation, he thought, had the other beat to a frazzle.

'But, Miss Finlay,' he said, trying to speak with a profound gravity, 'you can't defend the underhanded action of your party. You can't for sure?'

'All's fair in love and politics,' she announced with hardy confidence.

'Not,' he declared, 'when my cousin is the victim. No, Jennifer, whatever happens, I will not stand.' He stood up proudly and waved a hand as though renouncing a crown.

Jennifer flung her arms round his neck in a passion of gratitude. 'Oh, you truly are a lord,' she murmured. 'Tybo, they say you are married. Is it true?'

He disengaged the plump arms with pleasing deliberation, thinking that there was some extraordinary quality in the Touraine air that upset girls. 'No,' he announced firmly, 'I am not married, on my honour.' And only then it occurred to him that, for

all he knew, that extraordinary real Tybo might be. He was about to add — 'At least I don't think so,' but he checked that in time. He looked at the pretty Jennifer, so happy that the tears were popping and rolling like little balls down her cheeks. 'Anyway,' he told her, 'Ellis will be in one House or the other.'

'Oh,' she cried, 'I hope that Lord Llanthony will live a long time and that you will live for ever. I just like to pretend sometimes that Ellis is a lord ——' Tears stopped on that bright thought. He clasped her round the waist and danced her madly round the salon. Jacqueline, who had been playing 'See the Conquering Hero Comes' on the piano, changed to a dance tune. Jennifer was so glad that she had taken secret lessons.

They stopped, panting. 'If I go up, it will only be to turn back. No Paris for me while the delegation is around.'

'To Paris, to-night, alone?' Jennifer was terrified.

'Of course we don't mind!' cried Jacqueline. 'We shouldn't think of letting you go all that way for nothing.'

'It will be three o'clock when we get to our hotel. What will they think of us?'

'If they presume to think at all,' Jacqueline consoled, 'it will be how early we are. Come.'

As they walked down to the automobile, Jacqueline prettily extended an invitation. 'The Moat,' she said, 'would make a jolly campaign headquarters

— central, and all that. Do come straight to us. Mother would love it.'

'But, but ——' cried astonished Jennifer.

'Oh, this thing isn't ended,' interrupted confident Jacqueline. 'Your father will have something to say about it, Ponty.'

A whisper in Jennifer's ear restored her happiness: 'Whatever happens, I will not stand.'

She thought him truly noble, but she had no words for such splendour of renunciation.

'If we're found out,' were Jacqueline's last words, 'remember, I came to ask you to stand.'

He watched the auto lights disappear, then turned, laughing. 'I'll call this a day,' he said to himself and went straight to bed.

In the morning, drowsy Jennifer opened reluctant eyes to thumps on her door. She sprang up to Jacqueline's call and hustled into her waterproof. *Négligees* were not in her life. She opened to a figure so attractive that she cried enviously, 'Oh, if I could only wear my clothes like you do!'

'If I only had your pretty face,' said Jacqueline, pleased at the spontaneous compliment. 'You could learn, you know. It's only a trick. I'll be back to tiffin at twelve. After that, I'm at your service. We'll buy all Paris, if you like.'

'I'll wait, then,' said disappointed Jennifer. 'I'll just have another nap.'

Jacqueline went to Sara's hotel, sat down and

waited. After half an hour she found she had guessed aright; the deputation had wasted no time. She stepped forward: 'Spicy' — she called.

'Hello, Jack, you over here? I didn't know.'

She greeted the other two. 'Yes; had to come. My pinscher-schnauzers out of condition and had to get the right rations. I know what you're here for. You asked Daddy, you know, Mr. Baines. Everything all right?'

'Lord Pontlottyn is all you said, Jacqueline,' Mr. Garstin commented with warm approval. 'You've an eye for the young men, I see, as well as for dogs.'

'Shy,' said Sir Spicer. 'A bit Yankee, just as you said.'

'Both complaints easily cured,' Baines remarked. 'We'll get him all right.'

'Undoubtedly,' Garstin contributed. 'Llanthony is enthusiastic. He will consult Lady Llanthony. We shall hear at lunch-time.'

'So glad! Splendid!' cried Jacqueline. 'I must be off.'

She rushed in a taxi to the Salpêtrière, found that Lady Llanthony could see her, received an affectionate greeting.

'I can't see you and I am glad you can't see me,' the patient said. 'I don't know what my face will look like and perhaps I never shall know.' But she smiled, actually smiled, as she put a thin, trembling hand over the bandage which covered her eyes. 'My

looking-glass is the voice of my boy, Jack. You've seen him, he tells me.'

The girl plunged right into her subject, but was not allowed to get far.

'What? My boy a Member? But Jack, how splendid! I could spare him for that. Ah, yes, for that. If I were only well enough to be there! You must keep your eye out for a place for us. In that lovely neighbourhood, of course. We can settle down at last — at last. Jack, you don't know what it's been — his coming back at last. I always knew it. I was sure.' The eager woman poured out the pent-up happiness, lavishing fond praise. When her husband came, she proudly cried — 'They know him already — know him as I do! Splendid, isn't it? Tybo, Member of Parliament.'

'Quiet, dear, quiet. You must not excite yourself like this.' He stared at the intruder. She recalled herself to him, 'Jack Finlay,' she said. He nodded and smiled, lifting a warning finger to his lips.

'I must go now,' Jack said, sobered, rebuked.

'He shall go to you at the Moat,' Lady Llanthony cried. 'My dearest love to your mother. Don't forget to look out for a place.' They kissed affectionately. She called her visitor back. 'I shall always love you, Jack, for bringing your lovely news.'

'I'll give you a lift if you care to wait,' Lord Llanthony said.

After an affectionate parting she sat in the crowded

corridor, warm in admiration of the courage and brightness of Lady Llanthony. She had come to condole; she had stayed to congratulate. The mother lived only in her son.

Lord Llanthony came, heavy-bodied, heavy-footed, but almost young in face and manner. He was charming to her and listened with amused interest to her eager political talk.

‘Where can I drop you?’ he asked. She named her hotel, the same at which Ellis Evans and his bride had stayed. As the automobile drew up, she saw Jennifer coming out, saw the latter stop and stare.

‘Don’t get out, Lord Llanthony,’ she said, ‘and thank you very much.’ She shook hands with him through the window.

‘I am very sorry,’ he said, ‘more disappointed than you can think. The doctor forbids it. He had told me before I went to the sick-room. I had decided not to speak of it.’ Gentle reproach lay in his last words.

‘I am so sorry,’ stammered Jacqueline as the auto drove on.

She wheeled to face Jennifer. ‘Was that Lord Llanthony?’ asked the latter suspiciously. ‘I’m sure it was, and you’ve been ——’

‘You win, Jennifer. And now let’s go and buy the things “comme il faut” for the élite of Oldport.’

At his hotel Lord Llanthony dismissed the regretful delegation. Baines took him aside and returned his check for expenses. ‘These chaps would pay their

own and my bit can come out of the petty cash,' he explained.

'Keep it for the general fund,' was the expected answer.

They left with genuine sympathy for a disappointed father and with praise for the boy.

'A decent lad,' Sir Spicer said. 'Forget his wild oats, Llanthony. Everybody else has.'

'A promising youth,' Garstin warmly commended.

'We'll have him yet,' said Baines. 'He's young — there's lots of time.'

Lord Llanthony, alone, reflected on the brilliant success of his daring coup. He had, as usual, seized a chance. He had risked all on the nerve and readiness of the boy, who had faced the ordeal with a splendid audacity. There were now three Englishmen, of exceptional standing, of unquestioned probity, who could swear, who would always swear, that they had known the boy as an accepted son during the lifetime of the father. If the question of succession should be raised after his death, Lord Llanthony felt that he had provided decisive evidence. Two were younger than himself, would probably survive him; he was more than satisfied. He was proud of the boy.

CHAPTER XII

LORD LLANTHONY, starting very early the next morning, got out of his automobile and surveyed for the first time the château in which was to be founded a family. He smiled as he caught a glimpse of brilliant silk shimmering in the sunshine of the balcony outside the grand salon. One thing only could put that spot of colour up there on that white façade; the fantastic dressing-gown which he had carelessly added to the boy's kit on that memorable morning when they had gone shopping together. The boy had laughed at the idea of wearing this many-hued hand-woven garment—but there he was, at this moment, stretched out in a long chair, basking in the sunshine, enveloped in this peacocked silken robe. Lord Llanthony could see a needle of smoke rising in the still air and could guess that the smoker was lying flat on his back lazily counting the clouds. This promised well. He mounted the terraces as silently as his heavy feet would permit. He wished to surprise and tacitly approve the youth, supposed to be so busy, who could lie about like this at half-past ten in the morning. He passed servants and workmen with a pleasant greeting, went up the grand stairway with increasing satisfaction in the house, tiptoed round the brocaded curved furniture of the salon and stood with a grin looking down on the face of a sleeping youth.

On a table lay the remains of a breakfast, a silver coffee-pot, hand-painted plates, a tray of jade on which lay a long line of ashes, whence had risen the smoke which he had seen. He noted the firm neck exposed by the flaring silk shirt, the silk socks, the soft morocco slippers. All this was more than he had hoped at this stage. Never had he seen a more striking picture of luxurious idleness. The vaccination had caught. He looked out indifferently on the beautiful view, but his eyes came always back to this handsome, strong-limbed boy, so peacefully sleeping. He must find a valet immediately and send him down; a chap who took to it like this must not have the exertion of dressing himself. Vaccinated, yes, against capacity to work, to struggle, to endure; inoculated, yes, with love of soft ease and exquisite comfort; perhaps already the time had come to unfold the great plan. Never, it seemed, would better chance arrive to spread splendours before dazzled eyes.

Lord Llanthony nodded his head. The offer would be magnificent, unimaginable, beyond dreams. What sacrifice in return? Nothing; there was only to sit still and enjoy. An obscure name; what was that? The boy's father had already been forgotten. In another generation, no one would know that the father had ever lived. The bold gambler with destiny, as he gazed down, wondered whether there was family pride in the youth. He knew well that millions of utterly commonplace people in this world, descend-

ants of utterly commonplace ancestors, cherished ridiculous notions of some special merit or quality in their strain; an excellent and useful illusion, he admitted, tending to aid self-respect and to keep his employees honest. He had none of it himself, he never had had. No ancestor that he knew of had ever been worth a hang; but his descendants could justly look back on him with pride. He regretted as he turned away that he could not appear to some strutting great-great-grandson, proud in pedigree and possessions, and say to this one: 'I did more than amass your fortune, more than breed the son who carried on my line. Thousands of ancestors have done these things with the help of nature and luck. But I, I defied nature and law and bought an heir, established him, made him your ancestor, though I am not.'

The idea pleased him as he tiptoed away lest he wake this gorgeous sleeper from some dream of splendour. In his fine virility, he had no fear of death and he speculated with a grin on adding a family ghost to all else he was creating. If only he could reappear at intervals! And if they flouted him, he had only to drop a hint to his brother's descendants. Never had ghost such hold on his descendants. He smiled sardonically as he dropped for an instant onto a sofa so absurdly curved that he felt he could see two ways at once. Like other men of keen intellect, he sometimes gave his active brain a rest, and his lazy musings were apt to be bizarre, even macabre. All

men who think their achievements important consider life too short, and eagerly wish to see what coping stones ultimately cap the structures they have raised. Lord Llanthony, in this lovely, sunlit room, fondled for five minutes this idea of a ghost with a strangle-hold on his descendants, a hold only to be acquired by fraud. No statute of limitations runs against a fraud, and a man is either a peer of the realm or he is not. He was almost tempted to leave sealed papers to be opened a hundred years hence, that the world might know how clever he had been. He laughed and stopped his fooling. As he strolled about, more and more pleased, he learned to admire the efficiency of this gilded lordling, as he now called the sleeping youth. Her ladyship's rooms would certainly be ready.

He introduced himself to the housekeeper, whose story made him doubt whether the vaccination had been as successful as he had thought. 'Milor' had worked with his own hands — it was incredibly true, and up to one o'clock in the morning. He had begun again at the dawn and had only paused for bath and breakfast at half-past nine. Servants had arrived and two truck-loads of things. Yes, there was a pavilion in the garden behind in which an old man and his wife could be very comfortable. His lordship was inspecting this pavilion when he was joined by Tybo.

'Splendid!' he cried after greetings. 'You've done wonders. An old man and wife who need sunshine,

pensioners of mine, will be turning up from England in a couple of days. The woman took care of Tybo until he was two years old. You must be prepared. Here's all you need to know.' He handed over a sheet of paper, on which were typed such details of babyhood as this old couple would speak of.

'They have never seen you since,' Lord Llanthony continued. For the first time, and apparently speaking without intent, he confused or rather fused the two Tybos. 'They will accept you on sight and old Mollie may be affectionate.' He smiled. 'Don't hurt her feelings.' He turned quickly to another subject. 'Sorry about the deputation,' he apologized. 'You can see what happened. If you didn't please them, they were not coming near me. Hence, I was not in the secret. You pleased them too well, my boy. I congratulate you. I owe you much for not letting me down. The news got to Lady Llanthony. She was keen on it. I have explained to her that it was impossible in her state of health. Tell her there is plenty of time. Remind her how young you are. Say that you must study a lot to do justice to the legislative halls.'

'But; but ——'

'Tybo has started,' Lord Llanthony interrupted. 'Left New York yesterday for Plymouth.'

'That's a relief!' the boy cried so fervently that his lordship was assured that he had acted wisely in postponing the Great Temptation.

They had been strolling during this conversation and were now on the sunny terrace at the front.

‘He can never come here,’ the boy said. ‘I am too well known.’

‘Of course not,’ was the surprising answer. ‘I never intended that. Sit down, Tybo.’ He put a hand on the boy’s shoulder. ‘Let me make it short,’ he said. ‘I don’t like talking about it, but you are entitled to know. My son remained in England for a couple of years after the Armistice. I had no control over him. He led his own life, coming sometimes for money, but secretly supported by his mother. His associates were of the race tracks and the stage doors and finally he notoriously did a bolt for the United States. I followed. We had one meeting. He did not keep the second appointment. He could not be traced. Months after came a letter asking an allowance. He admitted that he was a drug addict, that he knew he could not alter his life, that he had no wish to do so. He was living under an assumed name, he wrote, and would promise never to reveal his own. Again I crossed the ocean. He evaded a meeting. I arranged through my Chicago agents to pay him an allowance. They do not know of any relationship.’

His lordship paused. Up to this point the story was true. The listener could no more than look his profound sympathy.

‘My confidential New York agent,’ his lordship resumed, ‘has found him. I am encouraged that he

was willing to come. What I do not like is that he travels under his assumed name. Convenient for me and you that there should not be two Tybos in Europe at the same moment; but a bad sign. I fear my representative, who is with him, cabled that fact to forewarn me that he could not yet be a credit to his name.'

'Then ——' began the startled boy, but he was stopped by a lifted hand.

'I had to find a place for Lady Llanthony at a moment's notice. I thought only of her. It seemed best — you will agree that I was right — that you should boldly take your place as my son. You have done fine work for her and for me here. You have assured her a few days more happiness in this lovely place. You could have achieved neither of these results, so necessary to her, if you had not come out in the open. This is her convalescent home, no more. She is making great strides, thanks to you. Within a month, two months, she will probably be able to travel in comfort. She can go where she will, settle where she may choose.'

Tybo nodded, understanding now, full of a great pity for the sorrow that was coming to the unhappy woman.

'The boy shall come here quietly, under the rose, as fast as I can bring him,' his lordship went on. 'His mother must be told, whatever his condition, however heavy the blow to her. She is strong enough now perhaps to bear it. He will certainly need care, building

up. She will decide whether she shall be the one to do this. If so, we shall go far from here — perhaps to the south of England, or France, or to the United States. It may be that a nursing home is the place for him ——’

‘Yes. It may be as bad as that.’ Tybo sat with bent head reflecting.

‘In any event, you must be freed. I ask only one thing more. If your mother — pardon, my boy, but I think of how she talks of you, of her pride in you — if Lady Llanthony should get a setback from the exertion of moving ——’

‘Oh, never, Lord Llanthony. I should wait until she got stronger.’ He hesitated. ‘If he should be broken down, if a short time under proper care — oh, what is my time worth, anyhow? Nobody is expecting me; nothing waits for me.’

‘Would you? Could you? I should not have asked, but if you offer —— You see, it’s this way, I fear. That he was willing to come shows the will to fight, but he is probably a wreck, on a reduced allowance of drugs. A few weeks of care after supplies have ceased usually brings immense improvement.’

‘I’d stand for that, Lord Llanthony — for anything in reason that would make it easier for her. I can’t deny I wouldn’t like it for myself. I funk the parting — and that’s the truth. It’s meant a lot to me.’ He looked up, smiling a little. ‘Jacob never kicked, did he, because he got his father’s blessing by fraud? The

blessing seemed to work all right, too, didn't it? Well, so has mine. She has never said a word about the heartaches I am supposed to have given her. She never thinks of the past at all. She seems just happy, and she makes me — well, it's new to me and mighty nice. Sometimes I forget and things seem just as if I wasn't pretending, and then I go away feeling sorry for myself because it's not all real.'

The father of the young man who lay in a Chicago grave, headed by a stone which bore a false name, was stirred to depths by the deep though guarded emotion of his adopted son. He was moved almost to the point of utter frankness, to an appeal. He paused on the brink of confession. He had not traded in his life on disinterested affection; he feared to ask for love alone that for which he could offer other such great rewards. His touch on the boy's shoulder was affectionate.

'Can you give me lunch?' he asked.

'Sara sent a gang of servants. I hope they have something to eat in the house.'

'Your petit déjeuner seemed all right. I saw you asleep.'

Tybo reddened. 'I paralyzed 'em,' he said. 'When they came downstairs, they found me taking measurements. Afterwards I said I was going to have a bath and would have coffee on the balcony. In five minutes the butler came. He was two years at the Carlton in London and speaks English. "Milor's

bath is ready," he says. I go to dress afterwards. He had laid out the duds you caught me in. The melon, the coffee! Ah!' he laughed.

'That's what he's here for. Clap your hands and see how far away he is.'

A footman came, almost running.

'Déjeuner pour deux, à midi,' Tybo ordered.

'Si, milor,' was the respectful answer.

'You're getting on,' Lord Llanthony commented.

'I've got a phrase book,' was the explanation. 'I bought it to stall 'em off in case they insisted on putting me to bed.'

'You'll soon get used to it,' his lordship encouraged. 'You will learn that if you get somebody to do all the trifles, your brain is free for the big things.'

The boy laughed. 'If my friends in Ohio could see me now ——' He flung up his hands.

A telegram came. 'From Frank Archer,' Tybo read. He told the story of the murder. The case was coming up on the morrow. Lord Llanthony, secretly alarmed, argued against his going near the court. Publicity, probably snapshots, comments in the English papers; why interfere in a foreign squabble which had nothing to do with him?

'Only in case they get the wrong man,' Tybo said. 'You would not ask me to stay away then?'

'A conspiracy,' argued his lordship, 'obviously. The wrong man, as you call him, would certainly be in it somewhere. Anyway, plenty of time. The trial

wouldn't come off for weeks. You would be free to come forward without complications.'

Tybo shook his head.

'What you fear,' his lordship said, 'is little likely to happen. If it should, you risk all our plans.'

'Perhaps not, Lord Llanthony. Of course I should be a witness under my own name. I could not leave any man in prison overnight on a false charge of murder.'

'I like your decision; all right.' He did not like it at all, but he agreed without a sign of annoyance. He looked into the boy's eyes, which met his so firmly, at the resolute jaw, so strongly clenched. It was not going to be as easy as he had hoped to bend this youth to his will. It must be done, of course; a scheme on which he had so deeply set his heart, on which he had expended so much time and trouble, must not be wrecked by the absurd scruples of a penniless and obscure boy. He set himself to charm and interest, to excite compassion and sympathy for a father's disappointment in a son. He spoke only the truth and touched on painful matters without wincing. As he gave confidence, so he received it, and he listened with a profound interest to frank and open confessions of aims and ideals. That hour was memorable to Tybo. For the first time he felt that he had a genuine and disinterested friend in this stout old gentleman who understood so well, who opened his heart so freely. As the love of Lady Llanthony had taught

him what he had lost in missing the tenderness of motherhood, so in far lesser degree did Lord Llanthony teach him what an affectionate father would have meant to him. When they went in to lunch, his lordship took his arm and leaned on it heavily. The sensation was pleasant.

The two men waited on them, without a sound, without a command, foreseeing every need, white-shirted, in faultless-fitting morning jackets. Tybo was not permitted even to remove the chicken livers from the silver skewers on which they were impaled.

'Delicious,' Lord Llanthony commended; then, laughing: 'From your own fowls, I suppose?'

'We draw the line,' was the answer. 'We go some, but we're hardly likely to kill twelve chickens to feed two people.'

'And why not, if you're fond of the livers? Brillat-Savarin had four turkeys cooked that he might get the eight oysters from their backs.'

'I'm no sybarite.'

'Why not be one? Enjoy while you can and bask while the sun shines.'

Tybo nodded; his own thought, but now always clouded by thought of the coming parting from Lady Llanthony. He spoke of this as they sat on the balcony and sipped their coffee.

'Try and forget,' his lordship counselled. 'What you must believe is that she will always be your

friend, that she will be interested in you, that she will write to you.'

'That can't be,' the surprised boy denied. 'She will hate me.'

His lordship shook his head, smiling confidently. 'She will always love you,' he said. 'You will have no bitter parting. It will not be your task to tell her. You will be going to Paris or London. You will say good-bye for a week. You will come back to us in six months or a year for a visit. You cannot deny her that. She will not be here, remember. Stanton Drew can come in his own name, and be the honoured and welcome guest of a woman whose life he has saved and who has learned to love him.'

Tybo had foreseen complete severance of all ties; that and that only. Judge of his delight, then; but he could not believe that she would forgive.

'A cruel disillusionment at first, of course,' Lord Llanthony admitted.

In making the prospective parting easier, his idea was to leave the boy more free to absorb luxury, to revel without care, to drink pleasure to intoxication. Then should come the splendid offer and with it mother love and a father's affection. This hour had shown him that he held this additional powerful lure. He had not thought of it before; such motives are not useful in founding corporations.

He sent the footman to the automobile for a forgotten parcel. He handed over a thousand gold-

tipped cigarettes, each marked with the Llanthony crest. He filled Tybo's gold case himself, then produced an amber holder.

'Don't think yourself a pampered youth,' he said, smiling, as he lighted a match. 'You are only living as we do. The deputation — tell me about it.' He watched the boy, who was lolling back, puffing with luxurious satisfaction, and he heard with laughter the tale of the seekers after a candidate. It lost nothing in the telling, for the forecast of the future had lifted burdens and the narrator was light of heart.

Monsieur Despradailles, passing, dropped in. The two men had met in Paris at the purchase of the property and renewed the acquaintance with mutual pleasure. He carried them off to his château, overrun by hordes of tourists, taken in relays by guides over the place. He tried to avoid the crowds as he displayed his treasures, but some people clung to his little party. He listened with patience to the usual flippant comments and once, with a good-humoured smile, refused a proffered tip.

'I'd like a snapshot of that man,' the tourist said; 'the only man in Europe who refused a tip.'

'Never you collect the rarities,' said Monsieur Despradailles afterwards. 'You see what becomes the end of that.'

'You are very patient, monsieur.'

'I am a trustee for my nation, for the world. Some have the true knowledge and the enjoyment genuine.

That consoles me. You will come another day when the château is closed.'

Lord Llanthony motored back to Paris that afternoon more than satisfied with his day.

In the final battle, if battle there was to be, the happiness of the mother might be the winning factor.

That evening he dined alone with Sara. To amuse her, he painted a picture of a gilded youth, sleeping on a sunny balcony at ten in the morning, of an epicure daintily feasting on chicken livers, of a sybarite, lolling back, exhaling rings of smoke from gilded cigarettes, of a cosmopolitan exquisite, beautifully got up, languidly admiring art treasures in the salons of Monsieur Despradailles. He was unaware that his picture displeased her. His recital produced precisely the effect which Tybo had from the first been sensitively careful not to bring about. Sara had unconsciously feared that a young man, poor, inexperienced, might lose his head and strut a little in his borrowed finery. This made him ridiculous, and youth is impatient with the absurd. The impression was confirmed the next morning by an incident as trifling as Lord Llanthony had meant his narrative to be.

Sara had made an appointment to go with Sam Tibbetts to the Sainte Chapelle. He had wished, he said, to catch the extraordinary lights of this beautiful chapel on her face and hair. Sacrilege, she had demurred. He had answered that beauty is never

sacrilege and that he wanted the sun's rays on her through the lovely glass that he might solve a problem in his painting of her face. The same great grilled entrance leads alike to the Palais de Justice and to the Sainte Chapelle, and as the two got out of their taxi, Tibbetts drew Sara behind a kiosk on the edge of the sidewalk.

'Look!' he cried.

About thirty feet away Frank Archer and Tybo stood by the side of the latter's shiny automobile. My lord's gloved right hand rested on the door, the other clasped a decorated cigarette holder. His fedora was carefully dented, his coat was perfectly moulded to his figure, his varnished leather shoes were topped by white spats. He was languidly bending over giving an order to the chauffeur. As he straightened and turned, they saw that in one eye was thrust a monocle. Sam Tibbetts drew a deep, fierce breath and his fists involuntarily clenched. He said nothing; for this foppish lordling was Sara's cousin. This man, he thought, wears an American frat pin, a pin secured in the frank, breezy West, where men were men and monocles and white spats brought swift and deserved punishment. The two followed the haughty youth at a distance, noted the jaunty swing of his cane, saw him gravely nod with condescension in assent to some comment from his companion. In solemn silence the two observers went round the side entrance to the chapel, while the other

two mounted the grand stairway to the law courts and entered the *salle des pas perdus*.

'Now,' said Frank Archer, 'you amble about this hall and look at the statuary. Down that *galerie* is the main entrance to the *Sainte Chapelle*. It is not always open, but if it is — there's your chance. If it is not, I'll take you there afterwards by the lower chapel. I'll be back in half an hour.' He hurried back to the criminal courts with a description of a murderer in his brain.

Tybo wandered about trying to be interested in the sculpture, but nervously impatient to hear that they had captured the right man. He was startled into consciousness by a sudden vision of what seemed to him a giant's jewel case — a miracle of tempered brilliance, where fairy-like arches sprang, and mellow sunshine filtered through gemmed windows onto gilded walls. He stood entranced — then he saw Sara, transfigured, absorbed, gazing up at the rose window. He saw Sam Tibbetts, gazing at Sara. He backed away and retraced his steps.

Frank Archer came, hilarious, with the good news that they had captured the right man. Tybo nodded absently. They crossed to the *café* in front of which he had sat on his previous visit to the courts. The confidence man of that day passed, saw them, and sat down. He was reintroduced to Tybo, who greeted him as one whose mind is far away. The two friends talked for a few minutes, then Bill Wallace silently

handed over five dollars, lifted his hat to my lord, and went his way.

Archer, with a grin, put a dollar into Tybo's hand. 'You've won!' he cried. 'Come to lunch down on the Boul' Miche. I've got four dollars to spend.'

They walked in silence, Archer watching Tybo curiously. 'You've won, I tell you!' he cried; 'the play's over.'

'What kind of a fellow is that Tibbetts?' Tybo demanded.

'Oh, hang Tibbetts. He's all right. What's got you?'

'He doesn't go far with me,' was the morose answer, so emphatically uttered that the eyeglass dropped to the end of its cord. Archer grabbed it rudely, wrenched the string apart, and shattered the glass on the sidewalk. This violence drew only a surprised glance from the victim.

'I say you've won — the play's over. What's the matter?'

My lord looked about him, puzzled. 'I'm awfully sorry,' he stammered. 'I say, what about the case?'

'The case — what case?' Archer stopped still and looked alarmed. 'Plumb looney!' he cried. 'Didn't you get it? I told you your friend was gathered in.'

'I'm sorry. I was — yes, I must have been thinking of something else.'

Frank Archer muttered something about an ambulance and a mental hospital.

Tybo opened his hand and stared at a dollar which he had been clenching tightly. He thrust it into his pocket. 'So everything's all right,' he said.

'Ah, coming out of your trance, are you?'

'Sainte Chapelle — it stunned me. Sorry.'

'I didn't know you were as sensitive to beauty as all that,' was the suspicious answer.

'Nor I — but there it is.'

At the lunch the four dollars were triumphantly flourished and Tybo excited to curiosity.

'Talking about you one day,' blandly explained the incorrigible Archer, 'Bill Wallace said you were very American, very carelessly dressed, and absolutely without the dignity of an English lord. I later told him you always suited your manners and your dress to the place, that you had a weird idea that you were slumming when you came over to the left bank, that you were naturally very standoffish and always dressed for Bond Street ——'

'So that's why ——?' Tybo frowned.

'Exactly. You fell for it beautifully.'

Archer had written that his friend must put on his best togs, that it would make a lot of difference if he had to appear in court, that great respect was always paid to real swells. At the morning meeting he had expressed high approval of 'the swank get-up,' had insidiously produced a monocle, had led Tybo into a bet that the latter could not wear it and live up to the spats, a whole morning through.

'Bill Wallace,' Frank continued, 'wouldn't believe that you really were a howling swell and I bet him five dollars you were. We arranged the same old meeting-place, and I led you there and you overdid your part so magnificently that you won me five dollars and made an enemy for life. You weren't even decently polite.'

'I am very sorry. I — I — was thinking ——'

'That Sainte Chapelle,' was the satirical answer; 'don't go there again. It recalled to you the beauty of Sam Tibbetts.'

'Why do you say that?' Tybo flushed red.

'Oh, you compared them in your trance. But he's crude Gothic, not gilded.'

After lunch Archer suggested a visit to his flat. He wanted to exhibit his friend and explain the joke.

'In these clothes?' Tybo exclaimed. 'Not me. And say, not a word about it — not a word.' He spoke angrily. 'You've made a fool of me quite enough for one day.' He parted stiffly from his astonished friend.

Thus it was that in the same hour Tybo knew that he was in love with Sara, she decided definitely that she did not want him.

Sara and Peter Archer met by appointment that afternoon. A long list of purchases for the new house was to be made and Peter knew where to go for everything, knew hidden stores in grimy left bank streets where beautiful things were to be had at half the

cost of the shops de luxe. They had not been together five minutes before some unspoken message was mysteriously conveyed. A thin film vanished, Peter became her bright, irresponsible self. They made a jolly excursion of their efficient shopping.

'I think Tybo would like that shade,' Sara would say.

'Much he knows about it,' the answer would come.

Another shopper was enjoying triumphs. Mrs. Ellis Evans had won the confidence and respect of her father-in-law by the daring judgment she had shown in her eventful journey to Paris. She had proved again that she had a natural flair as a buyer and a head for business. She had seen Paris wives and daughters helping fathers and husbands, virtual partners, working like beavers. She explained to her friends that their views were narrow and that she was going to do as they did in the great world outside Oldport. So she went to the store every day and began to take over the work of her husband, now absorbed in his campaign. She was thus brought into daily intimate association with the old man, who gave her more and more of his confidence.

'Ellis will win,' he said, sipping tea in his daughter-in-law's sitting-room. 'But he is so deeply in earnest about it that he is neglecting his business.'

'I am in it now, Daddy Evans.'

'Aye, and good at it. But his strong words will cost us all our best customers.'

‘No, Daddy, not our best customers; our best class of customers. For every one of those lost, we gain three of the others. That’s where our money lies.’

He nodded, staring a little resentfully from beneath his shaggy eyebrows. ‘The place of a woman is the home,’ he said solemnly. ‘Ellis objects very much to you working.’

‘He needs money. So do you. I help to make it. Let him talk, Daddy.’ She smiled. ‘Oh, he can talk all right. They cheered him so madly last night that I cried. Yes, the tears rolled down. I cry awfully easily, Daddy — useful sometimes.’ She had grown so fast since she had visited Paris as a bride that she could now laugh at her own tears. ‘Ellis, Member of Parliament, you Alderman, one day Mayor — we’re getting on, Daddy. Yes, we must turn our capital over faster.’

‘Guard against worldly ambitions, Jennie.’

‘I know, I’ll be careful. That was a splendid sermon about pride, Sunday morning, wasn’t it? When I’m acting as Mayoress for you, I’ll remember it. When I’m at the King’s Garden Party’ — her voice thrilled with exultation — ‘I’ll think of it. The King commands all Members’ wives to Buckingham Palace every year, you know.’

She looked so pretty in her excited anticipation that her father-in-law preached a little sermon about earthly vanities and she listened with demure interest. ‘I will try,’ she cried earnestly, ‘not to get

worldly.' She poured out more tea for him. 'Ellis takes everything so hard, Daddy. He wears himself out. Everybody knows he can't help but win. He might be home one night in the week.'

'He has his message to deliver, daughter. It is not mine. He goes too far, but always in the right way. He denounces well the levity of our age, the greed of our capitalists, the vainglory of our so-called upper classes.'

Jennifer nodded, eyeing the old gentleman. Was this the moment to draw from him the meaning of his checked and guarded utterance about Lord Pontlottyn? She seized the opening. 'The upper classes' — she repeated the words reflectively. 'What would Ellis do, Daddy, if one day he belonged to that class himself?'

The old man frowned. 'Do you cherish always that vain thought?' he reproved. 'I have told you it can never be.' He shut his stern mouth with a snap.

Jennifer, feeling that she was flinging herself to the wolves, bent her head and faltered out that she could not help cherishing the hope, that she thought of it every day; that it might be worldly to dream of being Lady Llanthony, but she just loved it, and it was not so wild a dream after all — only one life stood between — so there!

'No — two lives. That shameless youth is married and has a son.'

Jennifer lifted her head and stared with wide eyes,

her mouth open, globules of tears rolling down to her lips which she mechanically flipped away with the tip of her tongue.

‘The damned liar!’

The slow-uttered words struck the old man as would a bullet. His head dropped forward, his backbone crumpled, his eyes seemed to glaze.

‘His honour — he gave me his word of honour.’

Her husband came rushing in. ‘They’ve put up MacGarren!’ he cried, ‘a party hack. They’ve sent him down from London. To keep their party together, they say. I’ve got a walkover. There’s a rumour that they tried to get the snip we met in Paris, Jennifer. Yes, Pontlottyn!! If he had run, they say I might have had a real fight on ——’

‘Ellis’ — his wife rose and faced him. ‘I have just said that your cousin, Lord Pontlottyn, is a damned liar.’

The husband stared. The old man groaned. She wheeled on the latter. ‘Where is this wife and son?’ she demanded sharply.

‘In Chipping Campden, a Cotswold village.’

‘And why isn’t she with him?’

‘He deserted her. She has pride.’

Jennifer burst out with the story of her visit to the château at Tours. They listened, too astonished to interrupt.

‘Yes!’ she shrilled. ‘I kept him from standing. I saved you, Ellis. And he swore he was not married!’

At the door she turned. 'Husband and wife should be together,' she cried. The slam of her bedroom door shook the house. The two men looked at each other in consternation.

'It's the Finlay girl,' quavered the old man. 'They say hunting women swear.'

'It's the modern woman,' said the husband. 'They all swear.'

'Could we — could we pray for her?'

'I — I — must do more than that, Father.'

CHAPTER XIII

THE château was a place of bright gaiety, where laughter rang as from untroubled hearts and joyous chatter sounded from irresponsible youth. Lady Llanthony had been two days in her new home and was already showing marked benefit from the change. Her doctor had promised her a wheeled chair within a month and a great specialist had guardedly said that she might regain some use of her eyes. These hopes were cheering, but she would have been happy without them; absence of pain and the presence of her son were enough. She was carried each morning to her balcony and she listened with delight to the laughter from below. The Archer twins were there and Sam Tibbetts, behaving very well now and painting his commissioned portrait of Sara with tractability and a touch of genius. The little party had been gathered at the request of Lady Llanthony. 'Tybo,' she had said to Sara, 'is tied to my apron strings. Get these scapegraces you have told me about down here for a visit. We must make it bright for him.' She had unknowingly repeated the suggestion of her husband, who wished the boy to swim in pleasure and to know what wealth could do in extending lavish hospitality. To Sara he had said: 'We owe him everything. Make his last days with us something for him to remember.

It's our one way of showing gratitude.' To the twins Sara had repeated the request so just and reasonable. Here were three extremely capable young people, then, engaged in burning incense before the shrine of this young man whose glory as a lord was so soon to fade away.

'We are Aztec priests and priestesses,' Frank Archer had said; 'we are fattening and pampering a beautiful youth who is shortly to be sacrificed to the great god, Quetzal.'

'They always gave that victim a girl,' Sara had drily observed. Peter had nodded without smiling. The two had been utterly friendly since the hour in which Sara, by mysterious means known only to women, had signified that she laid no claim to special rights in Tybo.

Sam Tibbetts, too, if not a priest who knew all the mysteries behind the shrine, was at least an acolyte. Sara had tamed him and kept him fairly well under control.

The vivid beauty of Sara in Sainte Chapelle had narcotized Tybo, who had retreated, dreaming. It had intoxicated Sam Tibbetts, who had advanced, drunk. In the studio he had smashed his palette and made a passionate declaration of love.

'Nonsense,' Sara had said. 'Maybe you're a genius. If not, you've a talent for acting it. Now, we'll clean the paint off the floor before it dries ——'

'Sara, I love you.'

'Look out. Don't kneel there. You'll get paint on your pants.'

'Sara, I adore you.'

'There, you've done it. Do you think I'd marry a genius ——'

'Sara, I worship you ——'

'And have Art for a rival? A wife might win over another woman, but she can't wrestle with an easel nor fight a box of paints.'

'It's that lah-de-dah lord!' Sam had cried, scowling murderously.

'Never. Now wipe up the floor and be more respectful to my relations.'

'There is no one else?'

'There is no one. Some day there will be some one. It will not be you.'

Thus firmly, and not perhaps gently, had she quashed hopes.

'I ache with love for you,' he had declared mournfully.

'Let the nerve die,' she had counselled. 'If you don't wince once, I'll be friends with you.'

At her next visit to the studio the floor had been cleaned and the portrait had progressed with a swifter, surer touch. Since then Sam Tibbetts had been progressively friendly with Tybo, who, after all, wore the same frat pin and could not help being an Englishman and a lord.

Tybo played munificent host to a merry company

who united in concealing undercurrents and in joyous acceptance of his plans for their amusement. He had only to say ten words: two automobiles were at the door, sumptuous luncheon baskets were strapped behind, a footman went along lest one should have to unfasten a strap or lift a plate. Fifty lovely and historic spots within a day's run were there to choose from.

'Pleasures à la carte!' cried Archer. 'Romance, beautiful ladies, poisons, assassinations, donjon towers, kings, queens, wars: look at the menu and choose. How about the Angevin castle of Chinon, home of the Plantagenets? Lion-hearted Richard died there. A country girl forced its gates and wrung unwilling permission to save France. Fulke Nerra ——'

'Chinon it is!' they cried.

There, high above all the country round, they wandered amid the charming gardens which soften the grim ruins, lightly flitting in thought, as young people will, from fierce legends of fiery Angevin counts to the opening of the baseball season, from revolting tales of torture inflicted to the mellow beauty of the extended view, from the story of the hapless maid — peasant girl, conquering soldier, reviled martyr, canonized saint — to chatter about the new men's collars, which looked starched and were not.

Peter and Tybo, outlined above the western parapet, went to sweeping the wide prospect through

powerful glasses, choosing a wooded spot in which to make their halt and eat their late lunch. Frank Archer stopped short in his narration to Sara of a hair-raising exploit of Fulke Nerra. 'Look at her!' he cried, frowning. 'If I was only the Black Fulke ——'

'What would you do, Frank?'

'The Tower de Boissy,' he said darkly, pointing, 'has dungeons as deep as the lowest cellar of a New York sky-scraper.'

Sara glanced at this immense restored mass of polygonal masonry. 'Impossible, Frank. But if there were six stories down below the ground — no elevators and no lights, remember — which would you lower into the noisome pit?' She gazed reflectively at the two on the parapet.

'Him.'

'But what has he done?'

'Nothing. That never mattered to Fulke Nerra.' He came close and bitterly hissed words into her ear. 'To protect him, Sara. No use, though. If the pit was bottomless, and he was in it, she'd get to the bottom. Sara, what can I do?'

Sara shook her sun-flamed hair, admitting that she had nothing to suggest.

'Joan of Arc,' he exclaimed, 'fought France, the Court, and the King, for a chance to fight the English. That was fine. She made good, too. But to fight your brother, and the whole house, and the world for a chance to win a man — well, how about that for dig-

nity and pride and all that? How about it, I say?’

‘I’m afraid she’s pretty miserable, Frank.’

He nodded his head. ‘A boy scout on the trail has nothing on her,’ he said gloomily. ‘A leaf moves, a twig snaps, she’s there.’

‘It may come all right,’ she consoled. ‘He has plenty to think of, remember.’

‘I know, I tell her. She scowls and says she’s got no time. Oh, she’s lost all sense of shame.’

‘I doubt he knows.’

‘He doesn’t care enough to know. My kid sister! That’s the trouble — a kid. Her first encounter with this fatal love. What a curse it is!’ He caught her arm in final desperate appeal. ‘Take him away from her, Sara,’ he pleaded. ‘You needn’t keep him. You understand these things.’

‘Thanks, Frank,’ she answered coldly. ‘When I fight, I fight for what I want. What’s Sam up to, I wonder.’

Two couples converged on the recumbent youth who was discovered to be peering downwards through the cracks of a boarded-in well.

‘Looking for truth, Sam?’

‘It’s no well, Sara,’ he answered, looking up. ‘It’s the private entrance to the dungeons and it’s forty feet deep.’ He scrambled up and looked round the group. ‘Hey for the good old times!’ he cried. ‘We haven’t got any souvenirs like this in Michigan.’ He laughed. ‘Say, Frank, if that murderer had been

down there, he'd be there still.' He told them how a prisoner had dashed down a dark stairway at the law courts and escaped by a side door. He had got away in an automobile, the papers suggested, for one had been stolen from the street outside.

'It's your friend all right,' Archer said to Tybo afterwards. 'I meant to tell you and it slipped my mind.'

'It seems as if I took more trouble over that man than the police,' Tybo commented.

'We had two good sells out of him,' was the reminder. 'The Confidence Man and the Spatted Peer with the Eyeglass.'

They had a laugh over these incidents, completed their sight-seeing and travelled by maps to what Peter called 'the bosky dell' they had marked down from the parapet. They may have found it. They did not know themselves — tree clumps looked different close by; but they lunched merrily under spreading beeches in a farm meadow. There seemed no shadows there except from the trees. Tybo was a little silent at first as he watched the footman open folding tables and lay out patés de foie gras, Périgord pies, and elaborate dishes prepared by the chef. These people certainly knew how to live. He thought of picnics to come in Ohio and grinned at the contrast. Then he set himself for a jolly time.

It was after six o'clock when he got home to find his hot bath ready and his evening clothes laid out.

'I am at your lordship's disposal, milor,' said François, entering with a bowl of fresh roses. 'His lordship is here and I am to stay. I hope I will give your lordship satisfaction.'

'Sure, you will, François.' He watched the roses placed in the exact middle of the colored marble chimney piece.

'Shall I shave your lordship, or will your lordship have a little nap, or a shampoo after the bath? I am very good at the rubbing.'

'A shampoo, please,' was the prompt answer. Tybo seized every chance to try everything once. 'Gee!' he muttered and thought to be stifled with all this effeminacy; but the subsequent skilful manipulation of his muscles gave sensuous pleasure and left him supple of body and refreshed in mind. He had not thought to enjoy dinner after that luxurious lunch, but he went downstairs with the appetite of a wolf. Yes, these people had certainly got the art of living down fine. Life was a prize fight with Pleasure. Seconds sponged and fanned them between rounds, and they leaped to the next bout with ardour.

Lord Llanthony eyed him with approval and greeted him almost affectionately. 'He's turned you out well,' he said. 'Learn to use him!'

'For what? Ohio?'

'I keep forgetting,' was the spoken answer. 'No, for Europe,' was the hidden thought. He turned troubled eyes on the young man. 'I must meet the

ship at Plymouth,' he said in a low voice, glancing about. 'I leave Paris to-morrow night. I cannot tell how long I must be away. Will you run up every other day? I will leave all instructions and you will use my rooms as your own. Open all letters. Deal with them if you can. Put the writers off if you can't. Don't fear to take responsibility. I will accept anything you do. By the way, did you remember to pass on my offer to the Archers?'

'Yes, he thought a lot of it.'

'Tell him to come to me to-night after dinner. I shall be glad to make some money for him.'

'You are mighty kind.'

'They are friends of yours, therefore of mine.'

Then Sara came in her favourite green, with a necklace of emeralds gleaming against the white skin of her throat. 'Auntie snapped them on herself,' her voice choked; 'she said she never cared to wear them again and she would like me to have them.' She looked from one to the other with mournful eyes. 'It's awful. The first night father and son were together in the new home — that's what she said.'

'Inside of a month,' Lord Llanthony reassured, 'she'll be saying that she has two sons.' He put a hand on the boy's shoulder and smiled confidently.

The Archers came in, Peter in black chiffon velvet, looking oddly grown up to Tybo. He had no idea that this dress was for him — to show him that she was not a kid. She was restrained in her admiration

of the necklace. Her brother was vehement. Sam Tibbetts came, laughing, boisterous, to be struck dumb in adoration of Sara. She took him aside.

‘Sam,’ she warned, ‘if you don’t help to make this dinner go, I’ll say my aunt needs me and stay with her.’

‘Rather than lose you, Sara, I will howl for joy,’ he promised.

The dinner did go, with laughter, chatter, outward gaiety. Tybo played his part too well. He acted, Sara thought, as though he forgot he was acting, forgot the coming parting with the blind woman upstairs. But she saw him through prejudiced eyes. Since she had heard of him as an effeminate idler and had seen him act the arrogant fop, she had misread his every action. His sudden marked change towards her confirmed her view. No more frank, eager confidences, none of the camaraderie that had marked their first days together; instead, an invisible wall, built by him which shut her out completely. A proud and independent girl barks no knuckles on a closed door; she retreats faster than in an older day when she had to pick up skirts to walk backward. So did Sara misread a desperate youth, who knew that he loved her, knew that he was penniless and she was rich, knew that such a mighty debt was due to him that she could hardly refuse if he asked, knew that he must soon steal silently out of her life. Forget the parting? He thought of it all the time — a parting

with an adopted mother whose love he had won by deceit, with a girl whom he loved and must not tell. He had a heavy part to play of which no one but himself knew; and his way was to fling himself with a passionate ardour into the pleasures of the moment. So there was reason in Sara's view.

When a manipulator of marionettes drops a string, he retrieves it with a rod which he calls the dead hand. Lord Llanthony, watching his puppets dance from eyes alert as a weasel's, resolved again to try match-making. These Archers knew too much. Immediately after dinner, he asked Sara to bring his coffee to the library. She complied, not seeing, as a real audience would, the dead hand.

'Have you decided?' he asked smiling; 'do you want him?'

She shook a brilliant disappointed head. 'Do you remember our Long Island gardener, Bill the Timberman?' she asked. 'Bill said if you bled a pine for turpentine, the tree made rotten lumber.'

Her uncle laughed. 'If he's so easily leached as all that, he would never have made a door post.'

'And that's true too,' Sara agreed with a little sigh.

'Your simile is odd but pungent. I believe that if he had kept his turpentine, you would have felled him for yourself.'

'Probably,' admitted the candid girl.

'Sorry. I want to pay him.'

'Not with me.'

‘With Peter?’

‘Wrap her up and send her. She’d love it.’

‘Oh! Are you sure?’

‘Of her, yes. He might refuse the parcel. Me, too; he would reject me.’

‘What’s the matter with the boy? It would solve everything so neatly. I could wrap either of you up in bank notes.’

‘Try wrapping him,’ prejudiced Sara counselled.

‘Oh, you think ——’

‘I told you he was sapped.’

‘Ask Frank to come here, do you mind?’

Sara shimmered away, the lights glinting on her emeralds.

Young Archer came, a little embarrassed, stammering regrets for his lordship’s troubles and the hope that everything would come right soon.

‘I hope so, too, Frank, thank you.’ His lordship held a match for the boy’s cigarette. ‘You, you and your sister, have helped me splendidly. I don’t know where we could have stowed Tybo if you had not put him up. I shall always remember that.’

‘Nothing, that was nothing. We liked having him. He’s great, isn’t he?’

‘There are no words for him, Frank. I wish he’d fall in love with Peter and marry her.’ The boy stared; Lord Llanthony laughed. ‘An idle dream, my boy; but how can I do anything for him? If he’d only marry Peter, I could settle a million or two on her

and he couldn't object, could he? How could a man refuse a wedding present to the bride? For himself — nothing. That's our bargain. I can't even offer. To see him go, empty-handed — that's hard. Help me, Frank. You know him well. How can we do something for him?'

Frank looked about, came close. 'In confidence,' he almost whispered, 'Peter wouldn't want the million. Moonstruck, plumb crazy. Thinks he's — well, she just grovels before him.'

'And he?'

'Steps on her and doesn't know it.'

'I'm sorry. I thought girls had ceased to love like that.'

Frank ground his teeth and frowned. 'She was up to date and a day beyond until she saw the boy and went mad. She's — she's mid-Victorian now. Lost to shame. Chases him. Poor kid.'

'I'm very sorry. He's carrying a heavy load. He's absorbed. His troubles will be over in a few days. Ask him to stay with you for a time before returning to the States.'

'Oh, fine! But ——'

'Two Tybos in Paris? What matter? The explanation is honourable. Let people talk. And now, you got my message about your affairs?'

'You are kind, Lord Llanthony. The kid sister and I don't worry, haven't worried. But prices rise every day in France and we get less than five per cent on

our money from the New York bank. We've twenty-eight thousand over there now waiting for investment, pulling no interest.'

'Nothing like the present. Draw a check now. Here's a blank. I'll make it roll up for you.'

The youth was only too delighted to comply. He left the Great Presence abject with gratitude.

'Twenty-eight thousand reasons for silence,' thought Llanthony, pocketing the check. He summoned the butler and asked if the old couple had arrived from England.

'Yes, milor. The uniformed courier of the Compagnie Cook has brought them and he has departed. They are quite comfortable, milor. No, they have not yet retired.'

'My compliments to Lord Pontlottyn and will he please to come here for a moment, and will you conduct the old people here in five minutes?'

'But yes, milor.'

When Tybo came: 'Sorry to interrupt your pleasures,' his lordship said; 'I'll keep you only a minute. A small matter — and you will wonder, perhaps, that it is forced on you. Old Mollie Jeremy wrote to Lady Llanthony, was told of the accident, you see — and she mentions the failing health of her husband — he is over seventy — and she tells how his old bones ache with 'rheumatics.' A summer in sunny Touraine, the very thing; Lady Llanthony asks me to send for them. How could I help it? They are here, the

couple I gave you the notes about. They would be deeply hurt if you ignored them. But you can, if you wish. I told you — Mollie will probably kiss you.'

'But the real Tybo?'

'You forget. He is not coming here. They have not seen you since you were two years old.'

The door opened. A spotless, apple-cheeked dame, a white-haired, bent old man, came in, startled, flustered, frightened. The dame bobbed a curtsy, the man touched his forelock.

'Aye, William Jeremy,' cried Lord Llanthony, extending a hand, 'the rheumatics have 'ee, but thee be'est hale and hearty for all that. And Mollie; art tidy as always and rosy.' He shook both her hands. 'And what dost think of thy boy, Mollie? A credit to his nurse, doant 'ee think?'

'Oh, the grand young gentleman!' Mollie grasped the proffered hands, spared the expected embrace.

Tears rained down her cheeks. 'I'd 'a' known 'ee anywhere, Master Tybo,' she declared with conviction, and had no doubt that she spoke simple truth.

'Of course you would, Mollie,' cried his lordship. 'I think you would, too, William Jeremy.'

'Aye, me lord, that I would.'

'Have you seen her ladyship? Well, to-morrow then. She cannot see you, but she will know your voices.' His lordship had exhausted his knowledge of peasant dialect in his first sentences, but the homely phrases had fallen as soft rain on parched lands. 'Do

you remember Miss Desmond? I forgot if she came to us.'

'Aye, me lord. We've knowed her and we've seed her this afternoon. She have looked arter us.'

'Of course she would do that. Now don't mind the foreign lingo you hear. The poor folk can't help it, you know. Just stay in the sunshine and we'll send you back after the summer's over and you can tell everybody how you've been to foreign parts. You're tired out now. You'd better go straight to bed.'

'And I'd allowed for passin' years, too,' said Mollie, 'and I looked to see a little lad, mebbe just trousered.' She stared at the young man, round-eyed.

'It's twenty years, Mollie,' Tybo reminded her, smiling.

The old dame twisted her head sidewise and smiled: 'Thee didst smile like that and laugh in thee pram when thee did see the clouds sailin' in the sky. Dost remember the little bird that fell on thee head from the nest in the 'olm oak? Oh, no, 'ow could 'ee?'

'Of course not, Molly,' his lordship said. 'Now go to bed and have a good sleep.'

Another touch to the forelock, another bobbed curtsey, and the bemused, uprooted couple went timorously hunting their way to the servants' hall.

'Sorry,' his lordship apologized, 'but how could I help it?'

'It's all right — I'll hunt her up to-morrow.'

'If you would — you will make her happy.'

The boy went soberly back to his dancing.

Thus the last link had been forged. Two people lived who identified the Tybo of boyhood with the Tybo of to-day.

Lord Llanthony was surprised and pleased the next morning very early when Sara appeared and escorted him down the terraces to his automobile. He turned and glanced at the house: 'A great success, Sara — perfect.' He chuckled. 'The sleeping prince in his rainbow robes; I told you about him. The only time I ever saw him tired!'

'Tired? Of what?' The tone was chilly.

'Surely I told you. He had worked most of the night and got up with the sun. No laziness in that youth.' He paused, one foot on the running-board; 'Sara' — he looked her full in the face as he continued — 'you have come very close to me. I've learned to know you, to appreciate you. I say to you, to you only, that I wish, I earnestly wish that no change of sons was coming.'

'Uncle!' She was shocked. 'Your own flesh and blood ——'

'You know them both.' He led her back into the garden. 'I'm off to meet him,' he said. 'I fear the meeting. A nursing home, perhaps. I've had to confide in the boy. I've told him. He will stay a little while longer if I ask it. He behaved extraordinarily well. He made no great favour of it. He said nobody was waiting for Stanton Drew.'

'Stanton Drew — Stannie Drew,' troubled Sara murmured. 'It sounds unnatural already . . . poor Auntie! And you, Uncle. Oh, I'm so sorry, so sorry.' She mechanically plucked a pear blossom and dropped the petals one by one. She had nerved herself for what she thought must come, but this new trouble struck deep.

Lord Llanthony caught her hand. 'Sara,' he said, looking straight into her troubled eyes, 'he's broken down. He's enfeebled by the life he has led. If he were dead, I should say to this Stanton Drew — for your aunt's happiness, I should say to this Stanton Drew, stay, stay for all your life. Be Pontlottyn while I live. Take my title when I go. It could be done, Sara.'

He wrung her hand and hurried away. Sara stood staring after the automobile, her face deadly white, her lips parted, her body poised, bending forward, her bare forearm extended as when her uncle had dropped her hand. A puff from the spring breeze slightly ruffled her hair and its touch on her cheek brought a movement of the head.

'Stop!' Mechanically she obeyed the sharp command. She stiffened. 'Fine. Hold that for ten seconds more.' The brief time had sped before she woke to full realization of her surroundings.

'Give it to me,' she commanded. Her voice was husky.

Sam Tibbetts perhaps did not hear. He glanced up

from his sketch with that painter's intense gaze which seems to cut like a knife thrust, and then down again as he drew telling lines.

'Give it to me.' She moved the few steps that brought her to him and held out her hand.

'Not likely.' He went on jabbing swift shadings, then flung down the pencil and stood up. He drew a sigh of profound satisfaction.

'What do I care what did it?' he cried roughly. 'Why should I care if you suffer? You laughed when I squirmed. You'll get over your trouble. But I ——' His voice vibrated in exultation. 'I have caught it — an immortal pose.'

'Give it to me.'

They stood eye to eye. Slowly, retracted once, he extended his hand. She took the paper, without looking at it, and tore it in fragments. He uttered a squeal of rage and rushed up the steps to the successive terraces. At the top, he checked abruptly, wheeled, stood frowning, watching her. When she was by his side, he said, with gloomy politeness, 'Sorry, Sara.'

She laughed. 'It was your going away, Sam. I happened to think of it.'

He scowled. 'Literally,' he said, 'you add insult to injury. You rob me of immortality and then sneer.'

'Nonsense, Sam. I'm really sorry you have to go.'

'I'm no plute, I have to work for a living.' She went on into the house while the perturbed artist

rushed down the garden. He grovelled, picking up every scrap of paper. 'Sorrow fades,' he muttered as he retrieved the last fragment, 'grief dies, but Art lives forever.'

CHAPTER XIV

THE day was devoted to Blois and there was much teasing of Tybo, who elected for the first time to drive himself. He nearly collided with the automobile of Monsieur Despradailles, in the endeavour to draw up abreast for a friendly chat.

‘Ah, Blois?’ the old gentleman exclaimed; ‘the castle of Marie Stuart — it was the training of the worst, that Court so full of love and the laughs, for John Knox and that climate of Scotland so horrible.’ He delivered quite an animated lecture in quaint English, and thoughtfully presented ‘Milor’ with a morning paper for which nobody cared; but Frank Archer glanced over it. As the journey proceeded, he chuckled and leaned forward.

‘That murderer haunts you,’ he whispered. ‘The missing auto has been found a few miles north of here. If he was in it, he’s in our neighbourhood and will call on you for sure.’

They dropped Sam Tibbetts, his suitcase, and pretended tears, at the railway station at Blois, threaded the quaint town, escaped from the guide at the château, enacted the murder of the Duke of Guise on the very spot, served imaginary drinks from the secret cupboards of Catherine de Médici’s poison closet, cast impudent horoscopes in the astrologer’s

room, and finally went to lunch at the inn — so they said — in which fugitive Charles Stuart paid for a dinner with a diamond ring; thus Dumas, at any rate, and they chose to consider 'Twenty Years After' as serious history.

On the homeward journey in the late afternoon the road stretched for miles along the side of the Loire, which meandered in its sandy bed a quarter of a mile away. The water was low at this time of year and a stretch of flat tussocked land, with here and there a clump of trees or bushes, lay between the high-banked road and the low, rolling river. No aspect in smiling Touraine can be wild, but this district was lonely. Farmsteads were scattered and travellers few. They overtook and passed a solitary walker.

'Stop! Stop!' At the peremptory cry from Frank Archer, Tybo sharply checked the automobile.

'The murderer!' Archer yelled.

Tybo turned. He saw the mad boy bolting down the bank after a fleeing man. He jumped out, shouting, 'Come back! He may be armed!' Archer paid no heed. Tybo shed his leather coat and ran. The soil was heavy, the start long. He gained no ground, but Archer did. When the fugitive won the shelter of trees, his pursuer was almost on him. Tybo set his teeth, got his second wind, and spurted. The sweat ran in streams, his heart pumped as he passed the trees. He saw Archer, prone, saw a heavy club uplifted. He tried to shout; only a snarl came; but it was

heard. The club was thrown aside, cap and wig were dragged off, the murderer bowed politely. All the same, Tybo, seeing red, struck at him. The fight began.

'The girls!' Frank cried as he thrust himself between.

'You should have thought of them before,' Tybo panted as he struggled to plant a blow in the eye of Sam Tibbetts.

'They know,' Archer said, as he pushed the two apart. 'Peter made the wig. She'll tell Sara.'

Tybo turned without a word. As he passed through the little clump of trees, he saw Sam Tibbetts's open suitcase. The sight softened anger and he walked more quickly. Dishevelled, collar broken away, hat missing and forgotten, clothes dusty, he approached the automobile with a high dignity. 'The joke is on me!' he cried as airily as circumstances permitted. 'Sam's changing down there in the trees. I think his suitcase must weigh forty pounds.' He jumped in and drove away, muttering, 'Yes, fifty pounds, sixty, perhaps.' He had not noted his silent reception, did not notice the absence of protest or laughter from behind him.

But one sentence had been uttered there since the chase began. When Sara had jumped from the automobile and started to run, Peter had said, 'It's a sell; it's Sam Tibbetts.'

Sara had looked, only looked, her censure for that

thirty seconds' delay, that half-minute of wasted anxiety. Words would have been milder. The two had not spoken afterwards. Nearly five miles had been covered and the château was in sight when Peter murmured contritely, 'I'm a pig, Sara, a perfect pig.'

'Yes,' agreed Sara with a chill in her voice, 'you certainly are.'

Peter turned her head at this rebuff and looked at Sara's profile through narrowed eyes. 'Do you know what you yelled out when he ran down the bank?'

'Of course. I called out Stannie, Stannie Drew.' Sara's eyes were fixed on the road ahead and she was sitting very straight.

'Do you know how you said it?' Peter demanded sharply. 'You gave him to me.'

Sara did not move, but the red slowly stole over her face and down her neck. 'You noticed, I suppose,' she said with perfect composure, 'that he did not hear.'

'I am not talking about what he heard,' was the tart response. 'I am talking about what you meant.'

Sara turned in her seat and gripped Peter's arm. 'You silly child!' she flamed. 'I have real things to worry about. Am I likely to be thinking about boys, or what I say, or what I mean?'

'Some people,' Peter retorted with a dark frown, 'think what they say and say what they mean — yes, whatever their troubles.'

The automobile slackened. 'Brace up,' Sara commanded as to a child.

The unconscious primary cause of this dispute opened the door. Sara looked at the dishevelled youth. She did not smile. She thought neither of the elaborate prank nor of what she had called out. She remembered at the instant only the extraordinary words of her uncle, uttered on that spot, that morning.

'I think, Tybo,' said Peter softly, glancing down the long road, 'that you are more than even.'

Tybo forced a laugh. 'What a lot of trouble they took,' he said.

The attentive chauffeur came running. The two girls lingered to see how far retaliation would go; each thought that the automobile would be sent for the stragglers. In a dreadful compound of French and English, Tybo got his orders over. The two messieurs preferred walking for exercise, he said; the automobile would not be wanted again that night. Sara flickered a smile and went into the garden.

'You've done just right,' Peter commended.

'You made the wig,' Tybo answered curtly.

Peter slipped silently after Sara.

All bright stories were carried to the invalid, who loved to hear of the day's doings. The two girls, affecting gaiety, laughed themselves into good humour as they told the tale. 'Absurd children!' Lady Llanthony cried and ordered them to keep a lookout.

An hour passed; the gong sounded — to dress for dinner; her visitors scattered. They were summoned almost immediately. They ran to the call and manned the balcony, where they stood and described to the blind woman the happenings beneath.

‘A great hay waggon piled high,’ Sara cried.

‘With wheels big as moons,’ Peter exclaimed. ‘Sam is sliding down now.’

‘Frank is stretched on top,’ Tybo contributed. ‘Asleep, I should think.’ His hand was on Lady Llanthony’s shoulder and she was stroking it.

‘No. He moves. He grabs the suitcase. Down it ——’ Sara’s joyous voice was suddenly cut off. She had glanced at her aunt and at Tybo. She bent her head and rushed into the room.

‘Sara,’ her ladyship called.

‘Laughed herself into fits,’ Tybo explained. He had seen her tears rolling down in a stream. Peter had seen, too. The two became madly hilarious and shouted wild insults at the two young men, toiling up terraces with a suitcase.

‘They’ve sneaked in,’ said Tybo. He rolled the chair through the French window and removed the shawl which he had placed round the invalid’s shoulders.

‘I feel,’ she laughed, ‘as though I’d seen a farce from the dress circle. As long as I have your eyes, my son, I shall never miss my own.’

‘I’ll be late for dinner,’ the boy said huskily, and he hurried away.

Sara, for the first time, had broken down. He had come nearer to it than ever before. The strain was awful. And he had to act now, too, while he was dressing; that terrible valet was always running about. At dinner, too — Sam Tibbetts was there, and the servants; the Archers; they knew of the coming change, but not of a sick and broken lord. They seemed in a gale of spirits as they discussed the Great Sell. Tybo might have left them to walk a mile or two, might think he had got even, but they had scared him into fits for five minutes at least and done his fancy togs down all right. They had invented every detail, the escape of the prisoner, the theft of the automobile. They had doled the story out piecemeal as from newspaper accounts, part at Chinon, part that morning.

‘Complete, perfect,’ Sam Tibbetts crowed.

‘Not the first, either,’ Frank chimed in. ‘Twice before, built round that prisoner, too.’ He recited the joyous incident of the dandy with the monocle crossing the court of the Palais de Justice.

‘We saw you,’ Sam cried, grinning, ‘Sara and I. You fooled us, all right, I’ll say that.’

‘Yes,’ Sara agreed, ‘you fooled us all right, Tybo. You did it too well.’ A slight sub-acid flavour in her speech as she turned the subject; that was the only sign she gave that the two incidents which had prejudiced her against Tybo had been explained away. Influenced by these petty happenings, she had assured

her uncle that she was indifferent to this young man, had told Sam Tibbetts that she would never marry this 'lah-de-dah lord,' had presented this Stanton Drew to Peter; large results from small causes, she reflected, blaming herself. But she speedily forgot it all in the thought of the sorrow that so soon must come to her aunt.

Tybo drove the visitors back to Paris the next morning and went, as he had been asked to go, to Lord Llanthony's rooms at the hotel. He found a letter reiterating the request that, in the enforced absence of the writer, pressing business matters should be concluded on Tybo's judgment and in particular the matter of the underwriting of the share issue of the steamship company. That had not been completed and could not be delayed. Lord Llanthony pointed out that he himself could not be reached on this sad secret journey, that the underwriting contract must be executed in his absence. It was not the money involved; he did not care for that; but his word had been pledged. Delay would mean the postponement of the flotation, perhaps its withdrawal. The prospectus must state that the contract had been signed. This document must, by arrangement with London bankers, be issued to the public immediately.

This letter had hardly been read when two visitors appeared: Mr. Darnell Spring, of Lord Llanthony's London office, and Mr. Catesby-Burns, on behalf of a London trust company. The usual compliments were

exchanged, regret was expressed at the enforced absence of his lordship, pleasure was declared at meeting his son. Mr. Spring produced from his portfolio an elaborate power of attorney authorizing Lord Pontlottyn to sign for his father; Mr. Catesby-Burns brought out a fat document and a check.

‘On that line, please, my lord,’ said Mr. Spring, pointing. ‘The contract reads, “Tybo Ellis, commonly known as Lord Pontlottyn,” “Llanthony, per pro. Tybo Ellis” — that’s the correct form I am advised. Ah, thank you. Will you witness first, Mr. Catesby-Burns? I will follow . . . Ah, that’s complete. My part is done.’

‘Mine begins,’ said Mr. Catesby-Burns, handing over the check, ‘and ends.’

‘If your lordship will kindly endorse the check — it is drawn to your lordship’s order. Ah, thank you. I am instructed to deposit this to your credit in a Paris bank. They will want to file your signature. Can you come with me?’

‘To my credit?’ His surprise was so obvious that Mr. Spring smiled and suggested that the little trifle of fifty-five thousand pounds was meant as a present.

‘Sorry,’ Tybo said. ‘I can’t go with you. I am not free.’

‘I wouldn’t for the world interfere with your lordship’s engagements. All that can be arranged subsequently. I’ll deposit the check as instructed.’

The two visitors left. ‘That,’ said Spring, tapping

the check, 'is my salary for a lifetime and my lord never lifts an eyelash.'

The other nodded: 'When you swim in an ocean of gold, what's a little trickle to you?' he asked.

The boy, sitting still in the gilded room, asked himself whether he would have signed if he had had time to think. Yes, he would have signed, he decided. Perhaps he had committed a criminal act; but he had never known of a crime that was not a fraud. No one was defrauded in this case. If the issue of shares should prove a failure, Lord Llanthony would do his part just the same; how could it be a crime if his lordship had authorized and afterwards confirmed the signature? Tybo forgot all about it in five minutes. His mind was in Plymouth. He could concentrate on nothing.

He returned to the château in the evening. Neither Sara nor he could pretend except in the presence of Lady Llanthony and they tacitly agreed not to meet there. So three days lagged along. The invalid rallied them on the quiet house; they must make friends; they must have more visitors — couldn't they get the madcaps back? They evaded; Tybo stayed longer away on his Paris journeys; Sara hardly saw him except at dinner. Then came a letter for her, post-marked Plymouth. 'My son is dead,' it began. After an hour Sara took it to the library. 'Read it,' she said and disappeared. The boy sprang up, alarmed, and took the letter from the table.

‘MY DEAR NIECE,’ he read: ‘My son is dead. He was ill all the way over and was carried ashore to die. He was brought under another name, as you know. He is buried under that name. His mother and I will decide afterwards about proper interment. I must be the one to tell her, of course. Not a word to her, not a hint. This will try you hard, but it is the only way. Tell *him*, if you think best. If you can carry the load — but, no, it is only fair that he should be told. I am coming as fast as I can. He did not recognize me. Not a word to his mother. That must be my task. The consequence to her — but I must not think of that. — Burn this letter —’

The boy sat, dazed. It was not in those first minutes that he thought of a mother’s bereavement. That he must go to her, see her, talk to her, be caressed by her — Oh, no, he could not personate the dead.

He jumped up as the door opened. ‘What must I do?’ he cried.

Sara stood, looking into his eyes. ‘I don’t know, Stannie,’ she said, ‘I don’t know.’

Neither made conscious movement, but now she was in his arms, clasped, held fast. Not a word was said; the only sound was Sara’s deep-drawn breath of relief as of a burden lighter because intimately shared. She retreated slowly, reluctant, her finger-tips brushing down his arms, loath to lose touch of him. They turned to the sound of footsteps approaching.

‘My lady’s compliments to milor and could he come to her ladyship?’

The boy sprang past the footman and strode swiftly along the hall. Sara, trembling, crept toward a chair, paused, straightened, set her face to composure and followed. Up the stairs she went, holding her breath, her head bent sidewise, listening. No sound came from behind the curtained glass doors, but, as she passed close, she caught the murmur of voices. She gave a smile and a word to a passing housemaid and stopped the footman who thought to enter the salon. ‘Her ladyship confers with monsieur,’ she said, quite naturally. She thought to hear a cry, a sob, his call for help. She heard instead a laugh, her aunt’s ringing laugh. She flung up her head proudly. He was as strong as that, then. She must not fail him. She sat down now, watching the door. It opened at last. He came out — laughing. She sprang up. He faced her, pallid, anguished, the perspiration in beads on his forehead.

‘It is decided,’ he said, choking. ‘We must wait now for him.’ She took her handkerchief from her breast and wiped his forehead. ‘Love did it,’ he went on. ‘Love for you made me do it. If I had not, you would have had to tell her.’

‘Go, Stannie,’ she breathed. ‘Go to Paris and wait for him.’ Her hand trembled as she caught the lapels of his coat and looked, imploring, into his face.

‘And leave you here alone?’ he cried scornfully.

‘Not likely. I can do anything, now — except marry you. That — never.’

‘I know,’ she whispered. ‘Love me, that’s enough. I won’t fail you.’

A light sound as of a book falling came from the salon. Sara pressed the boy’s hand, then turned and entered the room, humming a gay tune. He remembered hearing it with her in the restaurant on the night they had gone to the Salpêtrière. He whistled a bar. He heard laughter within — her laughter, and Lady Llanthony’s. He rushed out of the house and went for a long walk. When he came back, Sara met him at the door. ‘He has come,’ she whispered. ‘He went straight to her room. I did not see him. He has ——’ She stopped short, staring wildly into the boy’s eyes. A faint sound of laughter tinkled down to them from the open windows above.

‘He hasn’t told her,’ he said.

‘No. Stannie, he won’t. He doesn’t intend to — not at all — ever. Oh!’ She wrung her hands and ran to her room.

CHAPTER XV

THEY met in the library, Lord Llanthony and the boy; the former natural, easy in manner, affectionate in his greeting, the latter pale, haggard-eyed, profoundly troubled.

His lordship's bright, penetrating eyes, so deeply embedded, made calm inspection. 'You have been under a heavy strain,' he said. 'How could I spare you? Unforeseen, not to be helped ——'

'I heard her laugh.' This came from a throat so dry that the words were hardly audible.

'I have not told her.' The boy stared. A long silence; the clock ticked on — the only sound — as they looked into each other's eyes. 'I shall not tell her. I shall never tell her — unless you force me to deal the blow.'

'You're crazy!' cried Stanton Drew, recoiling. Then he bent forward, frowning, obviously looking for signs of overstrain.

'She is happier than she ever was in her life,' his lordship said quietly, 'why break her heart?'

'But — but ——'

'You've nothing to do. It's all done. Just go on — that's all.'

'I don't get you!' cried the bewildered young man. 'Sooner or later ——'

His lordship lifted a hand. 'No,' he denied; never. 'Lord Pontlottyn now, my title when I'm dead, Lord Llanthony on your tombstone. No, don't interrupt. A simple, a natural result; you thought to give a dying mother a peaceful death; instead, you gave her life. Then you made her happy. Her love for you is the deepest, the most unselfish that woman may know.' The speaker leaned forward and put his hand on the other's knee. 'You love her?'

'You know' — this in a strangled voice.

'You would make great sacrifices for her happiness?'

'Anything — you know that — that could be done; anything in reason.'

'This is in reason. It is possible.'

'Possible? Hundreds of people have seen your son.'

His lordship snapped his fingers. 'None that will cross your path. A few years out of England; Lady Llanthony's health provides the excuse; a retired life; travel. It is almost certain that no man will ever say to you — "You are not the Tybo Ellis I knew." My boy, if fifty said it, do you know what it weighs against a father's, a mother's word? Nothing.'

Stanton Drew sprang to his feet and walked up and down, his hands clasped behind his back, his head bent. His lordship, following him always with intent eyes, went on in his level, penetrating voice. 'Who

knows you as my son?' he asked. 'Think. That political lot — strong men, important men; men whose word counts in England; my London representative, with him another man — a man strong in finance, respected by everybody; the Finlays, your French friends here. All this by accident — all building up to one end, the same end. It seems as if Fate had planned from the beginning. You and I don't believe in that, of course; but still — there it is. One slight accident, one little incident — if such had occurred, I shouldn't be making this appeal to you, now. But it hasn't happened.'

The troubled listener stopped in his rapid, nervous walk. He gazed with startled, speculative enquiry into the other's face.

'Even that old couple,' the latter continued, 'the couple out in the pavilion; she helped to nurse you in babyhood, she recognizes you now. Her husband sees through the same eyes. My boy, there's not a hurdle left to jump. It's done; finished. You've won the race before you knew you had started.'

'I'm mixed up,' the boy said in an agitated voice. 'Of course you can't leave a title by will, can you?'

'Of course not.'

'Then what about that man in Oldport who thinks I'm his cousin? Is he going to stand for this?'

'No trouble there. He accepts you.'

Drew started. 'He is not to know?'

His lordship smiled. 'You should read his spout-

ings. Down with the lords, that's his mildest saying. He is going to be elected, they say. You'd be doing him the greatest service in your power by keeping him out of the lords. His political career would be killed. Make him rich if you want to.'

The listener turned on his heel and resumed his walk.

'I thought you told me,' Lord Llanthony resumed, 'that he was in Paris on his wedding tour.'

'That's so.'

'François misunderstood then. The bride called at the hotel yesterday. What's her name? Oh, yes, Jennifer. She had a nurse and a little child with her, he said, and wished to know whether you were here or in Paris. Remember, I asked her here. If she should turn up ——'

The boy impatiently waved away the irrelevant subject. 'The Archers know!' he exclaimed.

'Friends of yours, of Sara, of your aunt, straight youngsters ——'

'Yes, straight,' was the significant interruption.

'That's it. A thing is right when nobody's injured and great benefits result to those you love. And to you, my boy, great benefits to you, secondary, of course; but ——' He rose and put his hand on Stanton's shoulder. 'It's not a small thing,' he said with profound earnestness, 'to have millions, to live on the grand scale, to wield power, to do great good, to enjoy luxury, to promote culture. Is it nothing to

you' — he took the boy's arm and led him to the window — 'is it nothing to you to feel that you are the owner of this place?' He felt the listener's start and he shifted back his hand to the boy's shoulder. 'You are the owner, you know. Look over that beautiful plain. Your château crowns it. Your personality — if you chose, and remained here long enough — could dominate the neighbourhood. Or you could keep it for a spring playground. You could come and go, as you chose, the whole world is at your command. You are rich to-day for your years . . .'

The absorbed, silent listener stood back and again fixed troubled, speculative eyes on his lordship.

'That document you signed,' the latter went on, 'brought you a quarter of a million dollars. It is banked in your name. Only you can touch it.' His lordship shrugged his shoulders. 'There can be a million there to-morrow if you have any use for it.'

'When did your son die?' The question rang out, sharp, imperative.

The answer came, calm, unruffled. 'Before I had ever heard of you.' The older man met unquailing the accusation in the menacing face of the confronting Drew. 'I came to Paris to tell a wife of the deplorable death of our son. I found her a wreck; but at her bedside, consoling, healing, drawing her back inch by inch from the grave, I found a son. That day I resolved that if he should be willing, he should stay

always. Could I ask him then, a stranger, who could not know how easy it was? Of course not. I must establish him first. I must build a foundation so solid, so firm, that I could come to him and prove that it was all done, finished; that he had only to nod his head.'

Suspicion, antagonism, cleared. 'It was for her?' Stanton Drew asked, his voice trembling.

'What else? Incidentally, there followed direct descent in my line, pleasing, of course; pleasing to me to adopt a son, of whom I could be proud, of course. Perhaps there was another motive, not altogether small either.' He came close and put his two hands on the boy's shoulders. 'I was afraid,' he admitted. 'I could not face telling her. Spare me that, my boy. Spare her the hearing.'

His lordship hoped for acquiescence on the crest of this wave of emotion, but his hope proved vain. He faced a look of enquiry, a puzzled gaze. 'And you've been pretending all the time,' Stannie said in a low voice, 'and about your son's death, too. Oh, I see why; you've told me; good reasons as you saw them, as you tell them: but how you could do it, I can't see.'

'Not easy — but nothing to telling her.'

'I see that, too. It isn't that. It's how you did it, how you got away with it, how you could fit in everything, think of everything; and never give yourself away.' There was a kind of awe in the voice.

'How many mistakes have you made?' his lordship asked.

'Ah, a poor blind lady — I saw her only an hour at a time; but you, you have fooled the whole world; yes,' he cried a little wildly, 'Death himself.'

'Softly, my lad. If I could deceive Death, I should be omnipotent; and I am only a man whom some think powerful, pleading almost on my knees to you for the happiness of my wife.'

Stannie Drew was in truth overwhelmed by the revelation of the iron-willed, gentle-handed duplicity, of the smooth-rolling mendacity, of this juggling with life and death, of this immense unconscious self-revelation which said in effect that all means were right if the end was good. His first reaction was desire to escape, as one would from an avalanche or a tidal wave. Sara? He looked up. Had she, too, been deceived? Knowing this life of lords, knowing her uncle, had she not seen the end to which every act of his was directed? He broke the long silence: 'Does Sara know?' he demanded abruptly.

'She knows, approves,' was the answer.

Stannie's head sank. An added pallor showed. 'All alike, then,' he thought aloud, 'you people ——'

'I dropped Sara a hint,' his surprised lordship corrected, 'the morning I left. Her love for her aunt is that of a daughter. Of course, she will approve.'

The boy looked up, nodded, straightened. His manner said: 'Well, I believe that, anyhow.' And it

told, too, of a great relief. 'If she had known,' he uttered with a high conviction, 'she would have told me.'

'Ah!' his lordship could not check that little exclamation. He was exultantly sure of success now. The boy loved Sara. 'I can ——' but Stannie Drew broke in.

'One question!' he cried. 'Why didn't you wait till you came; why write of the death?'

'I am as frank about that as I have been about all else,' was the quiet answer. 'That you might cross the Rubicon before I came. That you might see Lady Llanthony after you knew of the death. That I might truthfully say to you that all was finished. That no new effort, no fresh step, was required from you. Was I right? Isn't it true? You have only to sit still and all that men strive for falls into your lap — a great position, immense riches, houses, lands, luxury, power, love, mother love.' Lord Llanthony paused, then added slowly, 'The love of a girl, brilliant, accomplished, beautiful.'

Stannie Drew trembled visibly. The only sound was that of his panting breath. He lifted a contorted face, made a step forward as though to accept the offered hand of an adopted father, but rushed past instead: 'She expects me at this hour,' he said in a muffled voice.

'There is no hurry about your decision,' his lordship called after him. Lord Llanthony listened; yes,

the boy had gone to his wife's room. The reason was obvious; to convince himself that he was accepting for her sake. 'They call it New England conscience over there,' his lordship thought, and sent for Sara. He felt unaccountably tired; he had put all his nervous force into that trying and difficult interview. He had feared that the clever young man would think backward and discern his manœuvres; he had decided on utter frankness; all his explanations had been sound, had been accepted. Though he had failed to secure instant acquiescence, he had no doubt of ultimate success. Sara now crowned this dazzling heap of splendour. The boy wanted Sara. He must have her. But where was she? No one thought to search in the little house in the garden behind where she had fled from herself to console a homesick old couple. So she entered the library at last only an instant behind Stanton Drew.

Sara stopped short as she saw his ravaged face. She stood poised, her head bent forward, her heart unveiled by eyes that disclosed everything. 'Stannie — Stannie Drew!' The murmured words were freighted with passionate tenderness. He made one step towards her, checked, dropped his eyes.

Lord Llanthony, delighted, surprised, saw brilliant success for his cherished plans. 'Sara,' he cried, 'I ask nothing more from life. Your aunt will be happy. You two married.'

'Stannie Drew,' she breathed, 'has refused me once.'

‘Of course. He must.’ He glanced from one to the other. He added with a confident emphasis, ‘But my son will not.’

‘I can’t do it!’ the boy burst out. ‘Lord Llanthony, you give everything; but you ask everything. My name, my country, my flag. No.’

Sara leaped to his arms. He repulsed her.

‘Persuade him, Sara,’ said the astonished lord, turning to leave the room.

‘No!’ Sara cried. ‘He must choose. I love him, not his name.’ She turned and twined her arm in the boy’s. ‘Stannie,’ she said, ‘I am yours. Don’t think you’re losing me with the rest ——’

‘He can’t mean it.’ Lord Llanthony was completely unnerved. He looked suddenly old and flabby.

‘It is final,’ the boy said. ‘I have said good-bye to Lady Llanthony.’

‘You’ve not told her?’ His lordship’s voice was almost hysterical.

‘No. Not for me to do that. Called to Paris — for some time.’

Then the door opened. The footman uttered a name — Mrs. Evans. Jennifer rushed past him, obviously highly excited.

‘I’ve brought her, Lord Pontlottyn!’ she cried. ‘The wife and son you deserted. On your honour you weren’t married, weren’t you? Well, there are all the papers!’ She slammed a parcel on the table. She

turned to her companion, who came forward timidly, holding a toddling child by the hand. These three people, all dazed and worn out by the emotional crisis through which they had passed, stared at her.

Stanton Drew, hardly comprehending, not caring, mechanically extended a hand. 'I am very pleased to see you,' he said politely.

'Thank you,' was the grave answer.

Jennifer broke into hysterical weeping. Sara, faculties restored, caught her firmly by the arm and led her out.

Lord Llanthony gazed open-mouthed at this self-convicted impostor, who proved her guilt by silent acceptance of the wrong husband.

'And you claim that he is your husband?' Lord Llanthony swept an arm behind him.

The young mother, seated in a chair, her child in her lap, looked vaguely around the room. The questioner turned. Stanton Drew had disappeared. 'The young man who was here; who shook hands with you.'

'Oh, no.' She had the beautiful liquid eyes of a Jersey cow and a skin as creamy as its new milk.

'But you didn't deny ——'

'I didn't understand, sir. I was confused.' A placid pair, now, mother and child, exuding health; his lordship could feel the pleasant contagion as he drew a chair near and seated himself.

'Have you a picture of him?' She took one from

her bag with a well-gloved hand. 'His arm is in a sling.' He studied the snapshot, not admitting that it pictured his dead son.

'His motor came through our front wall and stayed in our parlor. He was hurt, sir — my lord.' She had a lot of fine flaxen hair, elaborately done up, shimmering beneath a Paris hat.

'Of course Mrs. Ellis has seen this?'

'No, my lord.' He lifted his eyes from her new dress and looked a question. 'She never asked for it.'

'You nursed him, I suppose, in your cottage?'

'Yes, sir — for six weeks. Then he married me. The lines are there, my lord.' She put the placid child on the floor, bent over, and took off her well-cut new shoe. 'Excuse me, sir,' she apologized, 'it hurts.' The child grabbed the shiny trophy with calmly uttered half-sentences expressive of pleasure. His lordship looked up from the document which he was reading. The silk-stockinged foot was well shaped, the ankle not bad.

'Mrs. Ellis dressed you in Paris, I suppose?'

'Yes, sir, and had my hair done.'

'And why did you name your son John?'

'After my dead father. My husband had gone away. He never wrote.'

'But you believed that the boy would one day have a title.'

'Not till Mr. Evans told me. Mr. Evans of Oldport, my husband's uncle.'

The inquisitor glanced up. Every time he did that, he added an item to his inventory. Her ears were passable; her profile good; her full face very pretty, but without animation.

‘How did you know him?’ he asked.

‘We buy some lines from him, sir. Mother keeps the little shop and has the post-office. He came up to collect a bill. That was just after John was born. I told him I was Mrs. Tybo Evans. He found it all out and came again and said John would be Lord Pontlottyn one day.’

His lordship’s eyes followed the child, who was toddling about solemnly investigating. ‘And why didn’t you write to me?’

‘Mr. Evans said not.’

‘You speak very well. You have not much Gloucester accent.’

‘I was a pupil teacher and took the higher grades.’

‘And why weren’t you to write to me?’

‘Mr. Evans said not.’

Some pressure was required to extract the reasons; Lord Llanthony and his wife were very worldly, almost surely they would ignore the marriage, they would undoubtedly support the heartless desertion of their profligate son. Then Mrs. Ellis had come with the news that her father-in-law had changed his mind, that a broken, blind lady would surely welcome a grandson, that a reformed husband would do justice to his injured wife. It was denied that the visit was a

surprise; Mrs. Ellis Evans had said that she had written.

‘Do you keep a cow?’ the cross-examiner asked.

‘Oh, yes, since John was born.’

‘I thought so. And you milk her, of course. You grow your own vegetables, too, and you trench the potatoes yourself, I suppose. You help in the shop, besides.’

The mother rose placidly and limped to her son, quietly extracting a valuable ornament from a clenched fist. ‘A pig, too, my lord, and the only asparagus bed in the place. We make all the jam and preserves we sell and people come for ten miles to get ours.’

Lord Llanthony went over and bent down. ‘Is he ticklish?’ he asked, gently prodding the child all over, smiling into the grave, solemn eyes. ‘He’s a fine youngster.’ He pressed the chubby arms, the plump legs. ‘Perfectly formed, too. Nursed him yourself, I’m sure?’

‘Of course, sir.’ The proud mother smiled for the first time. ‘He’s as healthy as he looks.’

‘Take off your gloves. You’ll feel more comfortable.’ She obeyed with hesitation. As he had thought, her hands were hard and rough, but they were shapely, the nails better than he had hoped. ‘How old was your father when he died?’

‘About forty. He was kicked by Lord Carstane’s horse. He was opening a gate for his lordship. Mother gets a pension.’

'Ah, an accident.' More questions; family history; no tubercle; great-uncles and great-aunts dying of old age. Lord Llanthony cried at last — 'Nature beats man.'

'Yes, sir,' the mother agreed.

He called a servant and sent for Sara.

'You do not ask about your husband,' he said.

'I am not coming back to him, sir. I didn't mean that ever.'

'He is not here. You will stay, for a few days, anyhow, and we will arrange everything.'

'I am not used to great houses, but ——'

'It's his house. You're his guest.' He pointed to the child.

'If you say so, my lord.'

Sara came, unnaturally calm on this day of storms. 'Sara,' said his lordship, 'this is Mary, Lady Pontlottyn. Mary, this is your cousin by marriage, Sara Desmond . . .'

'Please, miss,' Mary, Lady Pontlottyn, interrupted, 'you'll excuse me, but can you tell me if I can get some milk — some that you know is all right — for Johnnie.'

Sara smiled and picked up Lord Pontlottyn. 'Come,' she said as she hugged the child.

'Please ask Jennifer to come here.'

'She went right out of the house, Uncle, straight to the station. She was greatly excited and said something about relighting a candle in a tabernacle. I

think she was awfully disappointed. Did she expect a scene, Mary? Don't call me "miss." Say Sara.'

'She spoke of lighting a candle, Miss Sara,' answered the placid Lady Pontlottyn. 'She said there would be an explosion. I did not know what she meant.'

'Mary will stay for the present, Sara.' He beckoned. 'When she's settled in her room,' he whispered, 'tell her about Tybo.' The child in Sara's arms stroked his face. He smiled. 'Bring him here as soon as he's fed. Now, run along. Ask the boy to come.'

'He's gone, too — yes, for good.' Sara hurried from the room. She was followed by the deliberate, soft-moving Lady Pontlottyn.

Lord Llanthony leaned back in his chair and smiled again. His furious energy, his great abilities, his persistent will, all concentrated on one grandiose conception; on an effort, as he had said, to defy Law and defeat Nature — all wasted, the great plan wrecked by the foolish obstinacy of an insignificant boy: and in the moment of defeat along comes a baby with a bundle of legal papers. Nature and Law triumphant, generous in victory, presenting him in smiling irony with all that he had most desired; Lord Llanthony laughed out loud.

When the child was brought in, he carried him upstairs and set him in his wife's lap. 'This,' he said, 'is your grandson, Tybo's son.' Then he made the Great Confession.

CHAPTER XVI

THAT afternoon Frank Archer tossed a telegram over to the twin. 'It's bad news for you, old girl,' he said, 'but just what the news is ——'

Peter read it aloud: "'Tell Peter I am writing to-night, tell my fiancé that Lord Pontlottyn gobbled pint of bread and milk and has already broken Sèvres vase in his grandmother's room wire me his plans specially steamer port date do not tell him very confidential — SARA.'"

The twin sprang to the telephone. Her brother listened while she arranged with Mrs. Foster to join the Brittany sketching party; she would come now, she said, if Mrs. Foster could put her up, and they could all go together to the station in the morning. She rushed by Frank, checked, grabbed a drawing. 'She tore it to bits once,' she cried; 'here goes again.'

'Peter!'

She stayed her hand. Her gamin face was screwed in ugly wrinkles as she stared defiantly at her brother. 'Yes — give it to him,' she said in a hoarse voice. 'For a wedding present from Sam. I'll tell Sam to-morrow. Then there'll be two of us stamping round Brittany howling mad.' She flung down the sketch of Sara and bolted from the room.

Her brother heard her rushing about, packing,

heard her send her suitcase down by the servant. She came and flung her arms round his neck.

‘Sorry, Frank. But you don’t know anything about it . . . Damn!’ She ran away, calling over her shoulder, ‘Don’t forward any letters.’

An hour later Stanton Drew turned up. ‘Well, old son!’ But he stopped as he saw the sketch of Sara. ‘I say. I say. Fine! Sam’s work, of course. What’s she looking at? What was the matter with her?’

‘Sam caught her down by your gate. She’d just heard something, or dreamed something, all right, hadn’t she? Lord Pontlottyn’s ——’

‘Drop it — it’s dead — I ——’

‘Very much alive. He’s drunk a pint of milk’ — Stannie Drew stared — ‘and he’s smashed a vase in his grandmother’s room . . .’

‘A telegram? You’ve heard from Sara? Well, that’s fine hearing, all right. I say, this picture is pasted.’

‘Yes, Sara thought it ought to be a puzzle and made fragments of it. Sit down. Have a cigarette.’

Stannie took one: ‘This is a day, all right,’ he muttered, wiping his brow. ‘I’ll call it one. Lend me a hundred francs till to-morrow.’

‘As much more as you like and as long as you ——’

‘I shall be rich to-morrow. Stanton Drew can cash his little old draft, buy his ticket, and go home — some holiday. Oh, yes, I’ll say it is. Why did Sara tear it up?’

'Oh, put the picture in your pocket and shut up. Can't you guess? Caught in a revealing mood; girls hate that.'

'I am not so sure they do,' said Stannie Drew thoughtfully. 'I may have it?'

'Sam's wedding present. Congrats, my boy.'

Stannie frowned. 'She put a lot in one telegram, seems to me. Thanks. Not an engagement — not fair to her. I'm to get a job, and if I won't have her money, she's coming to live on my wages. Ha-ha.' The laugh was bitter.

'I've heard of worse troubles. Stay here till you sail. I'm all alone. Peter's gone to Brittany sketching. This milk-drinker, this vase-smasher? Sounds like a baby — yours?'

Stannie Drew smiled. 'Laid on the doorstep with all the papers. A live arrow shot from a dead past. His father dead, the kid is Lord Pontlottyn and takes my place.' Stannie Drew chuckled. 'I couldn't stay a minute, could I? I've taken on everything — but there is a line. I drew it at a baby. I couldn't father him, oh, no — his mother there, too. So I hopped out at the back as he came in at the front. The telegram means, of course, that he's proved legitimate and accepted.'

'More than that,' said Frank. 'In Lady Llanthony's room ——'

Stannie Drew nodded. 'She knows it all now. I wonder, is she upset, is she — does she blame me?'

‘Give the baby time, old man. He’s your friend at court. Now let’s go out and have dinner and celebrate the arrival at Paris of Mr. Stanton Drew.’ He took his guest to the gayest of restaurants. In the middle of dinner, the guest laid down his knife and fork.

‘Frank,’ he announced impressively, ‘never have a guilty secret. It’s a kill-joy. It is poisonous.’

‘I thought your appetite very good all through the crisis.’

‘Duty — I ate from a sense of duty. This is the first meal I’ve really enjoyed. It has the salt of honesty.’

‘And Sara not here!’

‘If she was, I couldn’t eat; I’d be looking at her.’

There was plenty to talk about at that dinner; hours of the mad masquerade to live over, incredible in the retrospect. The last flight from the château had had its humours, for Jennifer and Stannie had travelled by the same train. ‘I had just said good-bye to Sara,’ he said, ‘and of course the world was black. When I got to the Tours station, I saw Jennifer and went mad clear through. She hoisted her chin and looked away. I watched and got into her compartment. We were alone. “You played the low-down all right,” I told her. “To steer that kid there, without notice, his grandmother an invalid” — “Your child,” she yelled, “whom you’ve never seen — and you speak of him like that.” “Could I stay one hour

after his arrival?" I demanded. She looked at me as if I was crazy. "And your dear forgiving wife, whom you deserted so shamefully," she lectured; "you shook hands with her as though she was a stranger who had dropped in to tea." "She is all you say she is," I came back with dignity, "she is more than you say; but could I stay one hour after she came? Oh, no! See what you have done." "Done? What have I done?" She was crazy with curiosity now. "Can't you see?" I shouted at her. "Can't you understand?" She stared at me with her mouth so wide open I could see the gold filling in a wisdom tooth. "Husband and wife should be together," she muttered faintly. "Oh, well, if you can't see" — I told her with scathing contempt. I turned my shoulder and stared out of the window. She held out for two minutes. Then she gasped out, "Are you staying away?" "For ever!" I think my voice sounded as from the tomb.'

Frank roared with laughter, as he signalled to the waiter for a second helping of the entrée.

'She gave a little shriek at that and bored and bored away for explanations. I said with a grand air, "I have abdicated. It is final. The kid — by the way, what's his name?" "You are a monster," she said. "John." "John owns the château. He has a quarter of a million in bank." I flung out my hands. "All, I give him all," I cried. "Oh, what's it all about?" She was dazed. "I can't grasp the ideas of your class."

Then we drew up at Blois. Despradailles saw me from the platform and came into our compartment. I introduced him and the polished old gentleman kissed her hand. "No," I told him, "not Lord Pontlottyn any longer. We have found a baby, the unsuspected heir." I rang the changes on that all right until Despradailles got it. "Ah! Ah!" he cried, "I perceive, the disinherited one." He almost wept for me and called me a gallant knight. At Paris I put Jennifer in a taxi. "Twice," I warned, "you have come to the château. Once you kept me out of Parliament. Now you drive me from my home. Never see me again. You always put me down and out." The tears were rolling down her cheeks as she passed for ever from my sight ——'

He burlesqued everything that night, thus escaping thought. The morning brought a letter from Sara, reporting her aunt as dazed, stunned, without censure for anybody, and as already finding comfort in the baby. The new Lady Pontlottyn placidly said only pleasant things of her dead husband and was made welcome in the invalid's room. 'Auntie has lost a son twice over,' Sara wrote, 'and I feared antagonism against you. She doesn't express it. I don't think she feels it. I told her you and I were to be married in the autumn in New York. We are, you know, Stannie darling, and our wedding tour will be to your job, wherever it is. She kissed me, then asked for the baby . . .'

The boy poured out his heart in his answer. His prospects, he said, were too uncertain to permit an engagement. He had had, he told her with slightly acid humour, inside experience of the way she was accustomed to live and when he got within a hundred miles of that he would send her a ring. He was writing this letter when Lord Llanthony appeared.

Heavy-footed, agile-minded, bright-eyed as usual, his lordship besought him to accept prodigal offers — wealth, luxury, power, Sara; all these were his for a nod of the head. He shook it instead.

‘You and I,’ said the patient pleader, ‘must save quixotic Sara. She declares she will starve with you in a back alley ——’

The boy flushed. ‘I have told her,’ he snapped, ‘there is no engagement.’

‘You can’t keep her from your doorstep. The only way is to accept a position in my New York office. To accept is consistent with your dignity. To refuse is to slight Sara and wound me.’ There was no escaping this logic. Stannie yielded. Lord Llanthony’s last words, profoundly sincere, genuinely affectionate, were: ‘I do not think you have lost Lady Llanthony’s love. Be patient.’

The boy, in exalted mood, tore up his letter, bought a ring with most of the proceeds of his draft, and sent it and a letter by special messenger to the château.

Frank Archer went with him to see him off and introduced him to friends who were to be fellow pas-

sengers as the most original traveller who had ever visited Paris. No Louvre, no tomb of Napoleon, no Café de la Paix, no Montmartre ——

‘What did you do with yourself?’ asked charming dark-eyed Miss Saintsbury.

‘I specialized,’ was the vague answer.

It came time to part. Archer put it off. He held his friend at the foot of the gangway. ‘Sara’s coming,’ he said. ‘Cross-country trains. Due an hour ago.’

She came, tearing, after the last whistle had sounded, the last passenger had come ashore. An instant for one embrace, conspicuous, seen by everybody.

When he had run up the gangway, which was lifted as he ran, Miss Saintsbury called out, ‘The specialist — now we know what in.’

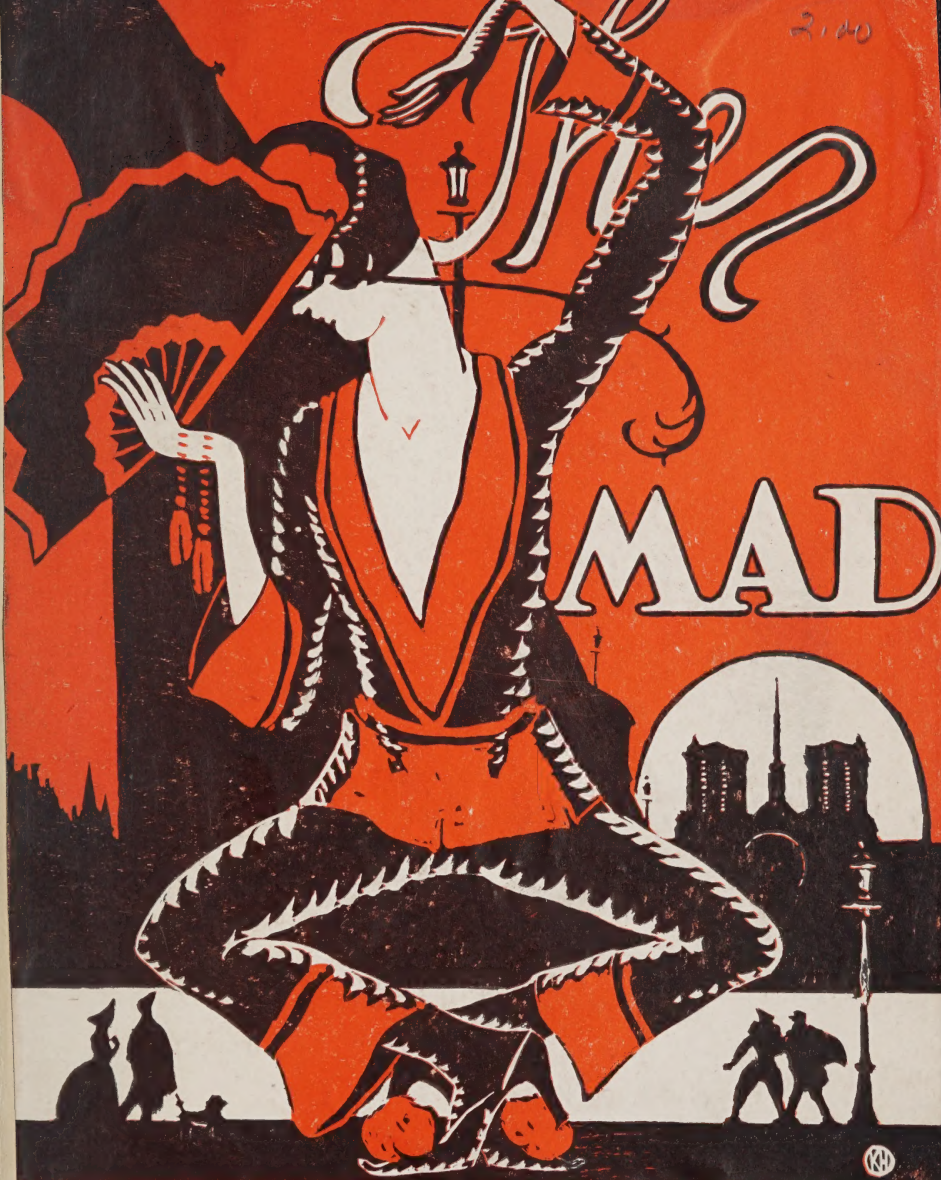
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MASQUERADE

KENYON GAMBIE

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